



Turkey Country Report

Children & Security

The Roméo Dallaire Child Soldiers Initiative

Updated as of 31 January 2017

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I. BACKGROUND

Map of Turkey¹



¹ Central Intelligence Agency, ‘Turkey’ (12 January 2017), <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tu.html> accessed 22 January 2017.



Impact of Conflict on Children

Children have been affected by the armed conflict between Turkey and various Kurdish separatist groups and the conflict in Syria and Iraq, which has spilled over the Turkish border. Throughout Turkey's ongoing and long-lasting conflict with the Kurdistan Workers' Party/Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê (PKK), children have often been victims of the violence and instability, and a number have been killed.² An estimated 40,000 people have been killed in the three decades over which the conflict has raged.³

Children in Turkey are also increasingly exposed to indiscriminate attacks from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) throughout the country. For example, in June 2016, Istanbul airport was attacked, leading to the deaths of 44 individuals, among them at least one child.⁴ Later in August, more than half of those killed by a suicide bomb at a wedding, were children under 14, including a three-month-old baby.⁵ It has been reported that the suicide bomber himself was a child.⁶

Turkey's land border with Syria remains closed, although people seriously injured in fighting are admitted to Turkey for medical treatment.⁷ There have, however, been documented incidents in which Turkish officials have denied medical and humanitarian aid to victims, including children.⁸ Children also continue to be recruited and used in conflict by groups such as the PKK. Turkey has launched attacks against ISIL and the People's Protection Units/Yekîneyên Parastina Gel (YPG) positions in Syria which are among groups recruiting and using children.

² See e.g. European Court of Human Rights, *Benzer and Others v. Turkey* (Application no. 23502/06, 24 March 2014), available <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/app/conversion/pdf/?library=ECHR&id=001-128036&filename=001-128036.pdf> accessed 22 January 2017, paras. 11, 49, 50, 106, 209.

³ Mark Lowen, 'Turkey-PKK conflict: Children caught in the crossfire' (BBC News, 18 September 2015), available <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34280461> accessed 22 January 2017.

⁴ BBC, 'Istanbul airport attack: Who were the victims?' (30 June 2016), available <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36675713> accessed 22 January 2017.

⁵ Al-Jazeera, 'Turkey: Suicide bomber kills more than 50 at wedding' (22 August 2016), available <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/08/injured-blast-hits-wedding-hall-gaziantep-160820204150494.html> accessed 22 January 2017 ('Al-Jazeera: Turkey suicide bomber'); Tim Hume, Isil Sariyuce and Joe Sterling, 'Turkey backtracks on age of wedding bomber' (CNN, 23 August 2016), available <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/08/22/asia/turkey-gaziantep-blast/> accessed 22 January 2017.

⁶ Al-Jazeera: Turkey suicide bomber.

⁷ Human Rights Watch, 'World Report 2017: Events of 2016' (2016) ('2017 Human Rights Watch Report'), p. 605.

⁸ Human Rights Watch, 'Turkey: Mounting Security Operation Deaths' (22 December 2015), available <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/12/22/turkey-mounting-security-operation-deaths> accessed 22 January 2017.



Turkey continues to host large numbers of refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and other countries. The majority of refugees in Turkey are Syrian, with approximately 2.8 million Syrian refugees in the country, half of them children.⁹ Refugee children are often traumatised by violence and require child protection and psychosocial support and other services which are currently under strain in Turkey. In particular, many refugee children are out of school. Although the situation appears to be improving with enrolment on the rise in 2016, hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugee children in Turkey continue to be out of school.¹⁰ A 2014 United Nations (UN) Children's Fund (UNICEF) report estimates that 10 per cent of Syrian refugee children, including those in Turkey, are working.¹¹

II. SECURITY SITUATION

1. Context

From the 1960s onwards, Turkey has experienced military coups and political instability. In 1974, Turkish troops invaded the northern part of Cyprus, and in 1983 declared the area it controlled as the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The situation remains this way today, and whilst there have been reunification talks in recent years, these have proceeded slowly.

Turkey has suffered decades of internal conflict with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The PKK was formed in the late 1970s and has been fighting a guerrilla war for Kurdish independence since 1984. The conflict peaked in the 1990s, and to date has claimed the lives of 40,000 people.¹² Over the years, thousands of Kurdish villages have been destroyed, causing Kurd civilians to become internally displaced. Hundreds of Kurd civilians have been prosecuted under Turkey's anti-terrorism laws, in trials widely criticised by human rights organisations.

⁹ See 3RP, 'Syrian Regional Refugee Response: Turkey' (12 January 2017), available <https://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/country.php?id=224> accessed 22 January 2017. See also UNICEF, 'Syrian Refugees and other affected populations in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey' (19 January 2017), available <http://www.unicef.org/appeals/syrianrefugees.html> accessed 22 January 2017.

¹⁰ 2017 Human Rights Watch Report, p. 604.

¹¹ UNICEF, 'Under Siege: The Devastating Impact on Children of Three Years of Conflict in Syria' (5 March 2014), available http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Under_Siege_March_2014.pdf accessed 22 January 2017, p. 5.

¹² BBC, 'Who are Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) rebels?' (4 November 2016), available <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-20971100> accessed 22 January 2017 ('BBC PKK profile').



A ceasefire was in place from 2013 to 2015. The ceasefire broke down in 2015 after Turkey launched Operation Yalçın, attacking ISIL positions in Syria and PKK positions in northern Iraq. As a result, tensions between the Turkish Government and the PKK escalated in 2016. Heavy clashes between January and May 2016 left hundreds of civilians, police, soldiers and PKK-linked militants dead.¹³

A failed coup attempt carried out by a faction of the army in July 2016 led to around 250 deaths, and the wounding of approximately 2,000 people.¹⁴ The Turkish Government has reportedly used this as an opportunity to crack down on opposition, resulting in the dismissal of alleged associates and followers of exiled cleric Fethullah Gülen, including teachers, the detention of public officials, and the closure of media outlets and civil society groups.¹⁵ Turkey has enacted extended states of emergency, with terrorism cited as the primary reason.¹⁶ The crackdown was not limited to those believed to be associated with Gülen. The pro-Kurdish opposition party was also affected, with two of its leaders, a number of members of parliament, and its elected mayors arrested and placed in pre-trial detention.¹⁷ Numerous and increasing reports of torture and ill-treatment committed by Turkish authorities in detention are reported, such as beating and stripping detainees, use of prolonged stress positions, and threats of rape.¹⁸

2016 was considered to be particularly bloody in terms of attacks carried out by ISIL, the PKK, and the Kurdistan Freedom Falcons/Teyrêbazên Azadiya Kurdistan (TAK), with attacks occurring at Istanbul airport, suicide bombings carried out in popular tourist areas and at a Kurdish wedding, and, most recently, a 2016 new year's eve terrorist attack on a nightclub in Istanbul, to name a few.¹⁹

¹³ 2017 Human Rights Watch Report, p. 603.

¹⁴ See Kani Torun, 'Turkey coup attempt: What happened that night?' (Al-Jazeera, 22 July 2016), available <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2016/07/turkey-coup-attempt-happened-night-160721132018415.html> accessed 22 January 2017; BBC, 'Turkey's coup attempt: What you need to know' (17 July 2016), available <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-36816045> accessed 22 January 2017; Humeyra Pamuk and Gareth Jones, 'Turkish military a fractured force after attempted coup' (Reuters, 26 July 2016), available <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-military-insight-idUSKCN10619L> accessed 22 January 2017; 2017 Human Rights Watch Report, p. 600.

¹⁵ 2017 Human Rights Watch Report, pp. 7, 600-601.

¹⁶ 2017 Human Rights Watch Report, p. 35.

¹⁷ 2017 Human Rights Watch Report, p. 600.

¹⁸ 2017 Human Rights Watch Report, p. 601.

¹⁹ United Nations News Centre, 'UN condemns terrorist attack in Istanbul on New Year's Day' (1 January 2017), available http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=55900#.WJN1CRiZM_U accessed 22 January 2017.



Turkey has played a significant role in the Syrian conflict and has traditionally backed opposition groups in Syria. Turkey has continued to target YPG and ISIL positions within Syria and also recently brokered a peace deal between the Syrian Government and the opposition.

2. State, Non-State, Regional and International Actors

a) State actors

Turkish Armed Forces

The Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) have conducted operations against the PKK within Turkey²⁰ and the YPG in Syria. In early 2016, the European Union (EU), United States (US) and UN condemned Turkey's continued shelling of YPG, noting the group's importance in the fight against ISIL.²¹ In July 2016, the head of Turkey's second army, who was responsible for its borders with Syria, was arrested for his role in the failed military coup, which resulted in the death of some 250 people. Around one-third of the Turkish military's generals were arrested, as well as thousands of members of its military, for their role in the attempted coup, significantly altering the structure of TAF. In 2016, Turkish forces entered an ISIL-occupied town on the border with Syria. It also engaged in intense operations against PKK-aligned militias, including the YPG.²²

b) Non-State Groups

Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK)

The PKK is a political party with an armed wing called People's Defence Forces/Hêzên Parastina Gel (HPG). The women's military wing is called Free Women's Unit/Yekîneyên Jinên Azad ên Star (YJA STAR). It is a left-wing organisation based in Turkey (and Iraq) and has been listed as a terrorist organisation by many countries, including Turkey.

²⁰ BBC, 'Turkish air strikes on Kurdish PKK rebels as mourning continues' (12 October 2015), available <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34501617> accessed 22 January 2017.

²¹ BBC, 'Turkey v Syria's Kurds v Islamic State' (23 August 2016), available <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-33690060> accessed 22 January 2017.

²² 2017 Human Rights Watch Report, pp. 600, 603.



The PKK has conducted both small and large scale attacks, including the use of suicide bombers, in order to advance its aims. In 2013, after decades of violence, the parties agreed to a ceasefire. Since at least 2015, the PKK has been again active in Turkey after the attempted ceasefire negotiations, with frequent reports of deadly attacks connected to the PKK. In March 2016, 114 PKK members were killed by Turkish security forces during a government operation. At the end of 2016, the death toll in the conflict between Turkey and the PKK rose nearly 10 per cent.²³ Since July 2015, more than 2,000 people have been killed in clashes between the Turkish military and the PKK, including civilians.²⁴

The PKK recruits and uses children. In 2015, the Turkish security sources reportedly stated that the PKK had recruited around 2,000 children during the previous two years.²⁵ Between 2012 and 2013, the supposed youth wing of the PKK, the Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement/Yurtsever Devrimci Gençlik Hareket (YDG-H), was created. It is primarily active in Cizne, Sirnak Province. In August 2015, it attacked police forces in Istanbul. Further, in October 2015, local media reported that many young members of the group appeared to be guarding the streets of Bismil in Diyarbakir province.²⁶ Clashes with Turkish security forces intensified in Cizne in 2016.

Kurdish Freedom Falcons (TAK)

TAK is a nationalist group that separated from the PKK around 2004, as the group did not agree with the PKK's potential truce between the PKK and Turkey. TAK has claimed responsibility for a number of attacks, killing hundreds of civilians throughout 2016, most notably for an attack in Keyseri in December 2016 which killed and injured civilians and soldiers. The TAK has attacked military targets such as a military bus, killing military personnel and civilians.

²³ Berkay Mandıracı, 'Turkey's PKK Conflict Veers onto a More Violent Path' (International Crisis Group, 10 November 2016), available <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/western-europemediterranean/turkey/turkeys-pkk-conflict-veers-more-violent-path> accessed 22 January 2017 ('International Crisis Group Turkey's PKK Conflict').

²⁴ International Crisis Group Turkey's PKK Conflict.

²⁵ AA, 'PKK criticized over "child soldiers" claims' (20 September 2015), available <http://aa.com.tr/en/turkey/pkk-criticized-over-child-soldiers-claims/245168> accessed 22 January 2017.

²⁶ Al Monitor, 'Young guns rule their turf in Turkey' (7 October 2015), available <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/10/turkey-kurdish-rebels-new-youth-wing-or-deep-pkk.html> accessed 22 January 2017.



Great Eastern Islamic Raiders Front/İslami Büyükdoğu Akıncılar Cephesi (IBDA-C)

IBDA-C is a Sunni Salafist group that aims to establish a pure Islamic state.²⁷ Described as anti-Semitic and anti-Christian, it usually attacks civilian targets such as churches, charities, and newspapers. In the past, it has claimed responsibility, together with Al-Qaeda, for terrorist attacks, including several bomb attacks in Istanbul in 2003.²⁸ However, it has been observed that that group has a tendency to claim responsibility for attacks carried out by other groups.²⁹

Revolutionary People's Liberation Front/Party/Devrimci Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi (DHKP-C)

The DHKP-C has engaged in violence for several decades. It aims to replace the Turkish government with a Marxist one.³⁰ Turkey, the US, and the EU consider the group as a terrorist organisation. In 2013, DHKP-C was responsible for a suicide bombing at the US embassy in Ankara which killed a Turkish security guard.³¹ The group also claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing on 6 January 2015 in Istanbul.

Grey Wolves

The Grey Wolves is a Turkish nationalist organisation, part of the far-right Nationalist Movement Party/Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi (MHP). They have been described as a neo-fascist group who believe that the Turkish race is superior. They have recently joined the fight in the Syrian conflict. The group's involvement in Syria has resulted in losses on the Syrian battlefield.³²

²⁷ United States Department State, Center for Special Studies, 'The Great East Islamic Raiders Front (IBDA-C), Appendix C: Background Information on Other Terrorist Groups' available <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/31947.pdf> accessed 22 January 2017.

²⁸ BBC, 'Istanbul rocked by double bombing' (20 November 2003), available <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/3222608.stm> accessed 22 January 2017; Ely Karmon, 'The Synagogue Bombings in Istanbul: Al-Qaeda's New Front?' (18 November 2003), available <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/the-synagogue-bombings-in-istanbul-al-qaedas-new-front> accessed 22 January 2017 ('The Synagogue Bombings in Istanbul').

²⁹ The Synagogue Bombings in Istanbul.

³⁰ BBC, 'Profile: Turkey's Marxist DHKP-C' (2 February 2013), available <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-21296893> accessed 22 January 2017.

³¹ Global Security, 'Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP/C)', available http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/dev_sol.htm accessed 22 January 2017.

³² Al Monitor, 'Turkey's nationalist "Gray Wolves" enter Syrian fray' (3 February 2016), available <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/02/turkey-syria-grey-wolves-emerge-as-jihadists.html> accessed 22 January 2017.



Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)

ISIL is a designated terrorist organisation and is widely known for gross violations of human rights, including brutal beheadings. Turkey joined the US-led fight against ISIL in 2014. In June 2014, ISIL captured the Turkish consulate and held its 49 staff hostage.³³ On 24 and 25 July 2014, Turkey carried out three waves of air strikes on ISIL targets in Syria.³⁴ In 2016, there were continuing attacks and bombings in Istanbul.³⁵ In December 2016, ISIL released a video showing two captured Turkish soldiers being burnt alive.³⁶ An attack on new year's eve 2016 in Istanbul left 39 people dead. ISIL claimed that it was revenge for Turkish military involvement in Syria.³⁷

ISIL has recruited individuals responsible for attacks from within Turkey's borders. It is estimated that more than 2,000 Turkish nationals crossed into Syria to join ISIL.³⁸ In 2015, reports emerged of an ISIL training camp for children in Istanbul where children of Tajik and Uzbek origin had been receiving militant training.³⁹ A report on Turkish nationals joining ISIL states recruits are 'overwhelming young, usually

³³ Ceylan Yeginsu, 'Militants Storm Turkish Consulate in Iraqi City, Taking 49 People as Hostages' (The New York Times, 11 June 2014), available <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/12/world/middleeast/militants-seize-turkish-consulate-staff-in-mosul.html> accessed 22 January 2017; Al Monitor, 'Turkey swapped 180 IS militants for 49 hostages' (2 October 2014), available <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/security/2014/10/turkey-iraq-syria-isis-hostages.html> accessed 22 January 2017.

³⁴ Ceylan Yeginsu, 'Turkey, Anticipating Attack, Strikes 3 ISIS Targets in Syria with Jets' (The New York Times, 24 July 2015), available https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/25/world/europe/turkey-isis-syria-airstrikes.html?_r=1 accessed 22 January 2017.

³⁵ Dominique Soguel and Suzan Fraser, 'Istanbul bomber identified as militant with IS links' (20 March 2016), available <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2016/mar/20/istanbul-bomber-identified-as-militant-with-is-link/> accessed 22 January 2017.

³⁶ Al-Jazeera, 'ISIL video shows "Turkish soldiers burned alive"' (23 December 2016), available <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/12/isis-burns-turkish-soldiers-alive-shocking-video-161223035619947.html> accessed 22 January 2017.

³⁷ Josie Ensor, 'Istanbul NYE attacker was directed by Isil commander who changed target at last minute', (The Telegraph, 18 January 2017), available <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/01/18/istanbul-nye-attacker-directed-isis-commander-changed-target/> accessed 22 January 2017.

³⁸ Monica Marks, 'ISIS and Nusra in Turkey: Jihadist recruitment and Ankara's response' (Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2016), available http://www.strategicdialogue.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/ISDJ4677_Turkey_R1_WEB.pdf accessed 22 January 2017, p. 7.

³⁹ Hurriyet Daily News, 'ISIL child training camp discovered in Istanbul' (19 October 2015), available <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/isis-child-training-camp-discovered-in-istanbul-report-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=90052&NewsCatID=341> accessed 22 January 2017.



ranging in age from their mid-teens to mid-thirties'.⁴⁰ Children recruited by ISIL have been used in a variety of capacities, serving as fighters, human shields, suicide bombers, and guards at checkpoints and on patrol.

People's Defence Units (YPG)

YPG considers itself a democratic people's army and has its foundation in the Democratic Union Party/Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat (PYD).⁴¹ Although Turkey regards PYD as an extension of the PKK, it claims that it is not related to any political party and its missions are carried out with the attribute of legitimate defence of people of Rojava. The YPG are infamous for their female brigade, known as Women's Protection Units, which were active in the siege of Kobani. The YPG claims that it has proved its military effectiveness all over Rojava and liberated most cities in Rojava-Northern Syria, carving out a self-autonomous region and resisting attacks and aggressions carried out by ISIL.⁴²

Turkey has shelled YPG positions inside northern Syria. The YPG is, however, regarded as an important ally in the fight against ISIL, leading to calls from the UN, US and EU for Turkey to show restraint. The YPG reportedly recruits and uses children despite commitments to demobilise, and commits other violations against children in Iraq and Syria.⁴³

c) Regional and International Actors

EU

Turkey is a candidate to become a member of the EU.⁴⁴ However, its relationship with the EU has been in the spotlight recently after the adoption of a EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan on Migration and Refugees, aimed at curbing irregular migration into EU member states.⁴⁵ The deal has been highly controversial as it

⁴⁰ ISIS in Turkey, p. 12.

⁴¹ People's Defence Units (YPG), 'About the People's Defense Units (YPG)', available <https://www.ypgrojava.org/About-Us> accessed 22 January 2017 ('About YPG').

⁴² About YPG.

⁴³ United Nations Security Council, 'Children and Armed Conflict: report of the Secretary-General', UN Doc. S/2016/360 (20 April 2016) ('2016 SG Children and Armed Conflict Report') paras. 59, 149, 151, 161.

⁴⁴ Delegation of the European Union to Turkey, 'EU and Turkey: History, available <http://avrupa.info.tr/eu-and-turkey/history.html> accessed 22 January 2017.

⁴⁵ See European Commission, 'Managing the Refugee Crisis, EU-Turkey Joint Action Plan: Implementation Report' (10 February 2016), available http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/background-information/docs/managing_the_refugee_crisis_-_eu-turkey_join_action_plan_implementation_report_20160210_en.pdf accessed 22 January 2017.



seeks to return asylum seekers reaching Greece by sea in exchange for billions of euros in aid and a pledge to resettle one Syrian for every Syrian returned.⁴⁶

The EU has been critical of Turkey's shelling of Kurdish forces in Iraq. On 24 November 2016, the European Parliament voted to suspend accession negotiations with Turkey over human rights and rule of law concerns.⁴⁷ They added that 'Turkey is not showing political will as the [Turkish] government's actions are further diverting Turkey from its European path'.⁴⁸

Cyprus

Turkey does not recognise the government of the Republic of Cyprus. It recognises the self-declared Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, which it occupied since the coup in July 1974. Turkey refers to the Republic of Cyprus as the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus. Turkey's failure to recognise the Republic of Cyprus, as well as its denial of Cypriot-flagged ships to access Turkish ports, has had negative impact on Turkey's accession negotiations. The situation has not changed and in January 2017, Greece urged Turkish troops to leave Cyprus, while Ankara insisted that this was out of the question.⁴⁹

US

The US and Turkey are North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies, and the US government has acknowledged that Turkey 'is an important US security partner'.⁵⁰ The US has supported Kurdish fighters in Syria and Iraq, in contrast to Turkey's view that such fighters should be labelled terrorists. Turkey, however, did join the US-led coalition airstrikes against ISIL targets.

⁴⁶ 2017 Human Rights Watch Report, p. 258.

⁴⁷ European Parliament News, 'Freeze EU accession talks with Turkey until it halts repression, urge MEPs' (24 November 2016), available <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/news-room/20161117IPR51549/freeze-eu-accession-talks-with-turkey-until-it-halts-repression-urge-meps> accessed 22 January 2017 ('EP Free EU accession talks with Turkey').

⁴⁸ EP Free EU accession talks with Turkey.

⁴⁹ Al-Jazeera, 'Cyprus talks stall over fate of Turkish troops' (13 January 2017), available <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/01/cyprus-talks-stem-fate-turkish-troops-170113155952455.html> accessed 22 January 2017.

⁵⁰ United States Department of State, 'U.S. Relations with Turkey' (23 December 2016), available <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3432.htm> accessed 22 January 2017.



III. Child Protection Concerns

1. Recruitment of Child Soldiers

Children are recruited and used by armed forces. The PKK began a ‘systematic recruitment’ of child soldiers in 1994, and has had ‘dedicated regiments’ of child soldiers.⁵¹ There is profound concern over the recruitment of child soldiers by the PKK. Reports indicate that youth are regular participants in the activities of PKK forces, but the data are difficult to verify. In 2013, the PKK signed the Deed of Commitment protecting children in armed conflict.⁵² Despite this, they continued to recruit minors. Children are often abducted and forcibly recruited. Kurdish families have called for the return of their children.⁵³ For example, in 2014, mothers sat in protest in front of the Diyarbakir Metropolitan Municipality, calling the PKK to bring back their children.⁵⁴ In 2015, the Turkish security sources reportedly stated that the PKK had recruited around 2,000 children during the previous two years.⁵⁵

The situation is complicated by children associated with YPG and ISIL, who are among armed elements under attack in Syria by Turkish forces. The YPG militia, the military wing of the PYD, have been reported to recruit and use boys and girls, some as young as 14 years old, within its ranks and for combat roles.⁵⁶

⁵¹ See e.g. Child Soldiers International, ‘Child Soldiers Global Report 2011 – Turkey’ (2001), available at <http://www.refworld.org/docid/498805c428.html> accessed 22 January 2017; Peter W. Singer, ‘Children at War’, (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2015), ‘Europe’.

⁵² Geneva Call, ‘Protecting civilians in armed conflict: Turkey’, available <http://genevacall.org/country-page/turkey/> accessed 22 January 2017.

⁵³ Al Monitor, ‘Kurdish families demand the PKK stop kidnapping minors’ (30 May 2014), available <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/tr/originals/2014/05/turkey-kurdish-pkk-kidnap-children-Erdogan-bdp-hdp.html> accessed 22 January 2017.

⁵⁴ Elif Merve Yediyildiz, ‘Kurdish mothers raise their voices against the PKK: “Give back our children”’, (Daily Sabah Turkey, 14 June 2014), available <http://www.dailysabah.com/turkey/2014/06/14/kurdish-mothers-raise-their-voice-against-the-pkk-give-back-our-children> accessed 22 January 2017.

⁵⁵ AA, ‘PKK criticized over “child soldiers” claims’ (20 September 2015), available <http://aa.com.tr/en/turkey/pkk-criticized-over-child-soldiers-claims/245168> accessed 22 January 2017.

⁵⁶ 2017 Human Rights Watch Report, p. 576; 2016 SG Children and Armed Conflict Report, para. 151; United States Department of State, ‘Trafficking in Persons Report’ (June 2016) (‘2016 TIP Report’), p. 358; United Nations Security Council, ‘Children and Armed Conflict: report of the Secretary-General’, UN Doc. S/2015/409 (5 June 2015) (‘2015 SG Children and Armed Conflict Report’), para. 193; Human Rights Watch, “Maybe We Live and Maybe We Die” (Human Rights Watch, 2014), available <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Maybe%20We%20Live%20and%20Maybe%20We%20Die.pdf> accessed 23 January 2017, p. 27.



Community pressure and coercion are among the factors leading to children joining the YPG.⁵⁷ 2014 and 2015 saw some progress in the demobilisation of children associated with the YPG and the initiation of disciplinary proceedings against officers who recruited or used children or allowed recruitment to take place.⁵⁸ Concern also persists over the creation of an YPG ‘non-combatant category’ for 16 and 17 year olds.⁵⁹ In 2015, Human Rights Watch listed 59 children, 10 of them under the age of 15, recruited for YPG or YPJ (Women’s Protection Units) forces since 2014.⁶⁰

In addition, as stated above, ISIL is also well-known for its recruitment and use of children and is listed by the UN Secretary-General for its recruitment and use of children.⁶¹ It actively recruits in areas under its control, with members of the group entering schools and mosques to provide weapons and jihadist indoctrination training, often under the guise of education.⁶² It has reportedly recruited and trained children as young as six and has extensively used young people in both support and combat roles, including suicide bombing missions.⁶³ Children recruited by ISIL have been used in a variety of capacities, serving as fighters, human shields, suicide bombers, and guards at checkpoints and on patrol.⁶⁴ The United Nations reports that it has received credible reports of the creation of an ISIL youth wing called Fityan Al Islam in Iraq.⁶⁵

⁵⁷ 2016 SG Children and Armed Conflict Report, para. 151; 2015 SG Children and Armed Conflict Report, para. 193.

⁵⁸ 2017 Human Rights Watch Report, p. 576.

⁵⁹ 2017 Human Rights Watch Report, p. 576.

⁶⁰ Human Rights Watch, Syria: Kurdish Forces Violating Child Soldier Ban – Despite Promises, Children Still Fight’ (15 July 2015), available <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/07/10/syria-kurdish-forces-violating-child-soldier-ban-0> accessed 22 January 2017.

⁶¹ 2016 SG Children and Armed Conflict Report, para. 150, Annex I.

⁶² United Nations Human Rights Council, ‘Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic, Rule of Terror: Living under ISIL in Syria’, UN Doc. A/HRC/27/CRP.3 (19 November 2014), para. 60.

⁶³ United Nations Security Council, ‘Report of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict in Iraq’, UN Doc. S/2015/852 (9 November 2015) (‘2015 SG Children and Armed Conflict in Iraq Report’), para. 33; United Nations Human Rights Council, ‘Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic’, UN Doc. A/HRC/30/48 (13 August 2015), para. 75.

⁶⁴ United Nations Human Rights Council, ‘Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the Human Rights Situation in Iraq in the Light of Abuses Committed by the so-Called Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and Associated Groups’, UN Doc. A/HRC/28/18 (13 March 2015), para. 46; United Nations Human Rights Council, ‘Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic’, UN Doc. A/HRC/28/69 (5 February 2015), para. 70; United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq and Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, ‘Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Iraq: 6 July - 10 September 2014’ (26 September 2014), available http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/IQ/UNAMI_OHCHR_POC_Report_FINAL_6July_10September2014.pdf accessed 22 January 2017, pp. 17–18.

⁶⁵ 2015 SG Children and Armed Conflict in Iraq Report, para. 34.



2. Trafficking and Child Labour

Turkey is a destination and transit country, and to a lesser extent source country, for women, men and children subjected to sex trafficking and forced labour.⁶⁶ The Government of Turkey does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts against traffickers as well as efforts to protect the growing and highly vulnerable refugee and migrant communities.⁶⁷ Trafficking victims in Turkey are primarily from central and south Asia, Eastern Europe, Syria and Morocco.⁶⁸ Turkey faces two problems in this regard. The first regards foreigners who are subjected to forced labour and are offered cleaning and childcare jobs, as well as jobs in hotels and discos where they are subjected to prostitution.⁶⁹ The second regards the vulnerable group of displaced persons, migrants, and refugees. In 2015, it was reported that one million Syrians and around 100,000 Iraqis alone arrived in Turkey with little or no access to legal employment.⁷⁰ Syrian children engage in street begging and work in shops to support their families.⁷¹ Refugee women and girls are also vulnerable either to sex trafficking or are sold into marriages.⁷²

In 2016, Turkey announced its decision to allow Syrian registered refugees to apply for work permits.⁷³ However, the effect is yet to be seen. There is little information regarding the working conditions under which Syrians in the informal sector work.⁷⁴ Reports suggest that working conditions are very poor, lacking core labour and social rights, with Syrians taking on seasonal agricultural work and low qualified positions in textile and service sector.⁷⁵

⁶⁶ 2016 TIP Report, p. 375.

⁶⁷ 2016 TIP Report, p. 375.

⁶⁸ 2016 TIP Report, p. 375.

⁶⁹ 2016 TIP Report, p. 375.

⁷⁰ 2016 TIP Report, p. 375.

⁷¹ 2016 TIP Report, p. 375.

⁷² 2016 TIP Report, p. 375.

⁷³ Terre des Hommes, 'Child Labour Report 2016 – "Because we struggle to survive": Child Labour among Refugees of the Syrian Conflict' (June 2016), available <https://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=11674> accessed 22 January 2017 ('Terre des Hommes Child Labour Report'), p. 36.

⁷⁴ 3RP, 'Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan 2015-2016: Turkey' (2016), available <https://undg.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/3RP-Report-Turkey1.pdf> accessed 22 January 2017 ('3RP Turkey'), p. 78.

⁷⁵ 3RP Turkey, p. 78.



There are conflicting numbers on how many children aged 5-14 work.⁷⁶ There are also no statistics available on children engaging in child labour among the Syrian population living temporarily in Turkey but it is evident that some children are out of school.⁷⁷ A number of children have found themselves engaged in child labour as well, including seasonal agriculture, small-medium enterprise and work on the street.⁷⁸ Around 90 per cent of children who were interviewed by Terres des Hommes were working, six to seven days per week and for more than eight hours per day on an informal or illegal basis.⁷⁹

3. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV)

Violence against women cannot be easily measured in Turkey, since the topic is considered taboo, leading to underreporting.⁸⁰ Women subjected to violence are very often reluctant to report incidents due to feelings of shame, mistrust of the system, and fear of repetition should incidents be reported.⁸¹ However, violence, including domestic violence, in Turkey is of serious concern.⁸² In 2011, Human Rights Watch reported that some 42 per cent of all women and girls over the age of 15 in Turkey and 47 per cent of women living in the country's rural areas have experienced physical or sexual violence at the hands of their husbands or partners.⁸³ Discriminatory violence against Kurdish children and women has been documented. In 2013, for example, reports emerged of children being exposed to systematic sexual abuse and physical violence

⁷⁶ See e.g. UNDP, Human Development Report 2015: Turkey (2015), available, <http://hdr.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/TUR> accessed 22 January 2017; United States Department of Labor, 'Child Labor and Forced Labor Reports: Turkey' (2015), available <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/turkey> accessed 22 January 2017.

⁷⁷ UNICEF Press Centre, 'Syrian children should be at school not at work' (11 June 2016), available <http://www.unicef.org.tr/basinmerkezidetay.aspx?id=22643&d=1&dil=en> accessed 22 January 2017 ('UNICEF Children at School').

⁷⁸ UNICEF Children at School.

⁷⁹ Terre des Hommes Child Labour Report, p. 36.

⁸⁰ See İlhan Yildiz, 'Violence against women in Turkey: Beliefs and Traditions' (International Center for Law and Religion Studies), available <https://www.iclrs.org/content/blurb/files/Yildiz%20presentation.pdf> accessed 22 January 2017.

⁸¹ Centre for Transnational Development and Collaboration, 'Syrian Refugees in Turkey: Gender Analysis' (2015), available <http://ctdc.org/analysis.pdf> accessed 22 January 2017 ('Syrian Refugees in Turkey Gender Analysis') p. 14.

⁸² 2017 Human Rights Watch Report, p. 605.

⁸³ Human Rights Watch, "'He Loves You, He Beats You'": Family Violence in Turkey and Access to Protection' (4 May 2011), available <https://www.hrw.org/report/2011/05/04/he-loves-you-he-beats-you/family-violence-turkey-and-access-protection> accessed 22 January 2017.



at regional boarding schools.⁸⁴ The refugee crisis has only contributed to the intensification of violence against women and girls, and other vulnerable groups.⁸⁵

Child marriage is also of serious concern. Women are used to pay off debts or are sold for marriages in exchange for commodities.⁸⁶ The NGO Girls Not Brides indicates that Turkey has one of the highest rates of child marriages in Europe, with estimates of 15 per cent of girls married before the age of 18.⁸⁷ This number is likely to be higher as most child marriages are unregistered and take place as unofficial religious marriages. Some girls are married to protect family honour or for economic reasons as a result of growing poverty.⁸⁸ The negative impacts on health due to child marriage are well documented, including denying female children the right to education and development.

4. Education

Refugee children in Turkey face challenges when it comes to schooling, with only 13 per cent reportedly attending secondary school.⁸⁹ Refugees fleeing wars in Syria and Iraq, for instance, often do not hold official documentation necessary to register in school.⁹⁰ Backlogs in obtaining official documentation from Turkish authorities have also served to keep children out of school. As refugee families struggle with livelihoods, children are placed at higher risk of working instead of attending school as costs associated with schooling are often beyond reach.⁹¹ Families have indicated that economic reliance on their children is the primary

⁸⁴ Alliance for Kurdish Rights, 'Boarding Schools in Turkey: Sexual Violence against Kurdish Children' (26 July 2013), available <http://kurdishrights.org/2013/07/26/boarding-schools-in-turkey-sexual-violence-against-kurdish-children/> accessed 22 January 2017.

⁸⁵ Syrian Refugees in Turkey Gender Analysis, p. 8.

⁸⁶ Syrian Refugees in Turkey Gender Analysis, p. 14.

⁸⁷ Girls Not Brides, 'Turkey', available <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/child-marriage/turkey/> accessed 22 January 2017 ('Girls Not Brides: Turkey').

⁸⁸ Girls Not Brides: Turkey. See also United Nations Security Council, 'Report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence', UN Doc. S/2016/361 (20 April 2016), para. 17: ('Increased debt and dependency on humanitarian assistance have led many displaced families to rely on harmful coping strategies, such as the early marriages of girls').

⁸⁹ 2017 Human Rights Watch Report, p. 51.

⁹⁰ 2017 Human Rights Watch Report, p. 55.

⁹¹ 2017 Human Rights Watch Report, p. 258; See also Human Rights Watch, "'When I Picture My Future, I See Nothing": Barriers to Education for Syrian Refugee Children in Turkey' (9 November 2015), available http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/turkey1115_reportcover_web.pdf accessed 22 January 2017 ('HRW Barriers to Education').



reason for not sending children to school.⁹² Out-of-school girls are more susceptible to child marriage, which has increased four-fold among Syrian refugee girls in Turkey.⁹³

5. Access to Healthcare

Access to healthcare has been impeded, particularly in the city of Cizre, as a result of operations by Cizre security forces and government restrictions on the passage of ambulances in the city of Cizre and elsewhere. Curfews and lack of movement have limited the ability of the wounded and sick to gain access to medical care. In September 2015, for example, several children died because an ambulance was unable to reach the city.⁹⁴ There have also been reports of attacks on ambulances.

Turkish refugees similarly face challenges in accessing healthcare, partly as a result of lack of documentation. In addition, language remains a key barrier in the delivery of health services to Syrian refugees in Turkey.⁹⁵ Refugees living outside of refugee camps in crowded conditions in urban areas are at risk of communicable and vaccine-preventable diseases.⁹⁶

⁹² HRW Barriers to Education, p. 9.

⁹³ 2017 Human Rights Watch Report, p. 27.

⁹⁴ Al Monitor, 'Ongoing violence, curfews keep doctors from tending to sick in southeast Turkey' (15 September 2015), available <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/09/turkey-pkk-clashes-cizre-violence-plagues-southeastern.html> accessed 22 January 2017.

⁹⁵ World Health Organization, 'WHO Field Presence in Gaziantep: Turkey Refugee Programme and Northern Syrian Response' (July 2016), available <https://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/download.php?id=11946> accessed 22 January 2016 ('WHO Field Presence Gaziantep'), p. 1.

⁹⁶ WHO Field Presence Gaziantep, p. 1.



Annex I: List of Abbreviations

DHKP-C	Revolutionary People's Liberation Front/Party
EU	European Union
IBDA-C	Great Eastern Islamic Raiders' Front
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
HPG	People's Defence Forces
MHP	Nationalist Movement Party
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PKK	Kurdistan Worker's Party
PYD	Democratic Union Party
TAF	Turkish Armed Forces
TAK	Kurdistan Freedom Falcons
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
YDG-H	Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement
YJA STAR	Free Women's Units
YPG	People's Protection Units
YPJ	Women's Protection Units

Annex II: Key facts⁹⁷

Turkey in a Snapshot

Geography	<p>Climate: hot, dry summers with mild, wet winters; harsher in interior.</p> <p>Terrain: high central plateau (Anatolia); narrow coastal plain; several mountain ranges</p> <p>Border countries: Bulgaria, Greece, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Armenia, Georgia</p> <p>Coastline: borders the Black Sea, the Aegean Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea.</p>
People	<p>Population: 80,274,604 (July 2016 est.)</p> <p>Median age: 30.5 (male 30.1; female 31) (2016 est.)</p> <p>Languages: Turkish (official), Kurdish, other minority languages.</p> <p>Ethnic groups: Turkish 70-75%, Kurdish 19%, other minorities 7-12%. (2016 est.)</p> <p>Religions: Muslim 99.8% (mostly Sunni), other 0.2% (mostly Christians and Jews)</p>
Economy	<p>Capital: Ankara</p> <p>Major urban areas: Istanbul, Izmir, Busra, Adana, Gaziantep</p> <p>GDP: GDP per capita: \$21, 100 (2016 est.)</p> <p>GDP by sector: Agriculture 8.6%; Industry 27.1%; Services 64.3% (2016 est.)</p>
Children and youth	<p>Population under age of 25: 41.19% (2016 est.)</p> <p>Unemployment (ages 15-24): 17.8% (16.6% male, 20.2% female)</p> <p>Child labour (ages 6-14): 321, 866 (3%) (2006 est.)</p> <p>Legal age of conscription: 21-41 (male compulsory service); 18 for voluntary service. One-year compulsory conscription for non-university graduates; 6-12 months for university graduates. Calls for conscription come at 20 years, for service at 21. Women Serve in the TAF as officers.</p>

⁹⁷ Central Intelligence Agency, ‘Turkey’ (12 January 2017), available <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tu.html> accessed 22 January 2017.



Relevant UN Security Council Resolutions

There are many Security Council resolutions relevant to Turkey, including the validity of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. The list below identifies the main resolutions.

On the invalidity of the ‘Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus’ – Resolutions 550 (11 May 1984); 541 (18 November 1983).

On Cypress and ‘The Cypress Question’ – Resolutions 365 (13 December 1974); 364 (13 December 1974); 361 (30 August 1974); 360 (16 August 1974); 359 (15 August 1974); 358 (15 August 1974); 357 (14 August 1974); 355 (1 August 1974); 354 (23 July 1974); 353 (20 July 1974); 349 (29 May 1974); 193 (9 August 1964); 192 (20 June 1964).

On the bomb attacks in Istanbul, Turkey – Resolution 1516 (20 November 2003).

On Terrorism in general - Resolutions 2253 (17 December 2015); 2199 (12 February 2015); 2170, (15 August 2014).

On the Middle East – Resolutions 2336 (31 December 2016); 2229 (29 June 2015).

On Children and Armed Conflict - Resolution 2225 (18 June 2015); resolutions released periodically, first resolution on this thematic area: Resolution 1261 (30 August 1999).

Turkish Child Protection Legislation

National	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Constitution, Section 90 • Child Protection Law, No. 5395 (2005) • Protection of the Family, No. 4320 (1998) • Law on the Agency for Social Services and Child Protection No. 2828 (1999) • Regulation on the principles and procedures for children and youth work, No. 25425 (2004) • Regulation on determining, evaluating, and investigating children in need of protection and on the adoption and rescinding of decisions to put under protection, No. 28 (1983) • Law on Protection of Children from Obscenity, No. 1117 (2005) • Penal Code, No. 5237 (2005) • Law Criminal Procedure Code, No. 5271 (2005) • Labour Act, No. 4857 (2003) • Civil Code, No. 4721 (2001)
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International	<p>Relevant Treaties and Optional Protocols⁹⁸</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified 1995) ▪ Optional Protocol to the Convention of the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (ratified 2004) ▪ Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (ratified 2002) ▪ Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst forms of child labour (ratified 2011) ▪ International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ratified 2002) ▪ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ratification 2003); including the Optional Protocol (2006) ▪ International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ratified 2003) ▪ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against women (ratified 1985); including Optional Protocol (2002) ▪ Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (ratified 1998); including Optional Protocol (2011) ▪ 1951 Convention relating to the status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol (ratified 1962); including Optional Protocol (1968) ▪ International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (ratified 2004) ▪ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (ratified 2009); including Optional Protocol (2015) ▪ International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrants Workers and Members of their Families (ratified 2004) <p>Relevant Treaties or Optional Protocols which have NOT been Ratified by Turkey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (adopted 1998)⁹⁹ ▪ Optional Protocol to the Convention of the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure (signed 2012)¹⁰⁰ ▪ International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (not signed, not ratified)
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⁹⁸ UN OHCHR, ‘Status of Ratification: Interactive Dashboard’, available <http://indicators.ohchr.org/> accessed 22 January 2017.

⁹⁹ International Criminal Court, ‘The States Parties to the Rome Statute’, available https://www.icc-cpi.int/en_menus/asp/states%20parties/Pages/the%20states%20parties%20to%20the%20rome%20statute.aspx#T

¹⁰⁰ UN OHCHR, ‘Status of Ratification: Interactive Dashboard’.



Annex III: TIMELINE OF NOTABLE EVENTS¹⁰¹

1923

October: Republic of Turkey is declared.

1952

February: Neutralist policy abandoned; Turkey joins NATO.

1960

May: Army coup against ruling Democratic Party.

1963

September: Turkey signs association agreement with European Economic Community.

1974

July: Turkey invades Northern Cyprus.

1984

Turkey recognises the 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus'.

The Kurdistan Workers' Party launches a separatist guerrilla war in the country's southeast.

1990

US-led coalition launches air strikes to Iraq from Turkish bases.

1992

¹⁰¹ The majority of information in this section is adapted from BBC, 'Turkey Profile - Timeline' (14 January 2016) available <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-17994865> accessed 22 January 2017; with additional references from: IB Times 'Why is Turkey in NATO?' (26 June 2012), available <http://www.ibtimes.com/why-turkey-nato-704333> accessed 22 January 2017; Al-Jazeera, 'Timeline: A history of Turkish Coups' (4 April 2012), available <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/europe/2012/04/20124472814687973.html> accessed 22 January 2017; BBC, 'Migrant Crisis: EU and Turkey plan one-in, one-out deal' (8 March 2016), available <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-35749837> accessed 22 January 2017; Hurriyet Daily News, 'Hundreds of PKK militants killed in anti-terror ops in Southeast' (9 March 2016), available <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/turkish-army-kills-114-pkk-militants-in-southeast.aspx?pageID=238&nID=96223&NewsCatID=341> accessed 22 January 2017; EU External Action Treaties Office, 'Summary of Treaty', available <http://ec.europa.eu/world/agreements/prepareCreateTreatiesWorkspace/treatiesGeneralData.do?step=0&redirect=true&treatyId=172> accessed 22 January 2017.



20,000 Turkish troops enter Kurdish safe havens in Iraq in anti-PKK operation.

1995

The Turkish government launches a major military offensive against the Kurds in northern Iraq, involving some 35,000 Turkish troops.

Turkey enters EU customs union.

1999

February: PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan captured in Kenya.

2002

August: Parliament approves reforms that aim to secure EU membership: abolishing the death penalty except in times of war, and lifting the ban on Kurdish education and broadcasting.

November: The Islamist Justice and Development Party (AK) wins national elections in a major victory, promising to abide by the constitution's secular principles.

December: Constitutional changes allow the head of the ruling AK Party, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, to run for parliament, and to become prime minister. Erdoğan had been barred from public office because of a previous criminal conviction.

2003

March: AK Party leader Recep Tayyip Erdoğan wins seat in parliament. Within days Abdullah Gul resigns as prime minister and Erdoğan takes over.

Parliament decides not to allow deployment of US forces ahead of war in Iraq but allows US use of Turkish air space. It authorises dispatch of Turkish forces into Kurdish areas of northern Iraq.

November: 25 people killed and more than 200 injured after two car bombs explode near Istanbul's main synagogue. A few days later 28 people are killed after suicide bombings at the British consulate and a British bank in the city.

2004

December: EU leaders agree to open talks in 2005 on Turkey's EU accession.

2005

October: EU membership negotiations officially begin.

2006

May: A prominent judge is killed in Turkey's highest court after a gunman opens fire. Four others are wounded. In response, thousands protest at what they believe to be an Islamic fundamentalist attack.

2006



September: The PKK declares a unilateral ceasefire in operations against the military.

December: Partial freeze on Turkey's EU membership talks because of Ankara's failure to open its ports and airports to traffic from Cyprus.

2007

April: Secularist rally in Ankara, aiming to pressure prime minister Erdoğan, who has an Islamist background, not to run in presidential elections.

Ruling AK Party puts forward foreign minister Abdullah Gul as its candidate after Mr Erdoğan decides not to stand. He narrowly fails to win in the first round.

October: Voters in a referendum back plans to have future presidents elected by the people instead of by parliament.

December: Turkey launches air strikes on PKK fighters inside Iraq.

2008

October: The governments of Turkey and Armenia agree to normalise relations at a meeting in Switzerland. Both parliaments will need to ratify the accord. Turkey says opening the border will depend on progress on resolving the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

2009

December: New measures are introduced in parliament to increase Kurdish language rights and reduce the military presence in the mainly-Kurdish southeast.

2010

April: Debates begin in Parliament regarding constitutional changes that would make Turkey more democratic.

May: Relations with Israel come under severe strain after nine Turkish activists are killed in an Israeli commando raid on an aid flotilla attempting to reach Gaza.

November: The whistle-blowing website Wikileaks publishes confidential cables revealing that France and Austria have been deliberately blocking Turkey's EU membership negotiations.

2011

June: Ruling Justice and Development (AK) Party wins resounding victory in general election. PM Erdoğan embarks on third term in office.

Thousands of refugees flee from Syria into Turkey. Ankara demands reform in Syria.

August: For the first time a civilian government has decided who commands the powerful armed forces. President Gul appointed top military leader after his predecessors resign *en masse*.

October: 24 Turkish troops are killed by PKK rebels near the Iraqi border. This is the deadliest attack on the Turkish military since 1990s.



2012

June: Schools in Turkey are permitted to offer the Kurdish language as an optional course.

October: After Syrian mortar fire on a Turkish border town kills five civilians, parliament authorises military action inside Syria, and the armed forces respond with artillery fire into Syria.

2013

March: Jailed PKK leader Ocalan announces end of armed struggle and ceasefire.

December: The government sacks numerous police chiefs over arrests of pro-government public figures on corruption charges.

2014

August: Prime Minister Erdoğan wins in the first direct election for president.

2015

June: The pro-Kurdish left-wing People's Democratic Party (HDP) enters parliament at elections, depriving the governing AK party of its majority and scuppering plans for a referendum on executive powers for President Erdoğan.

July: Turkey announces air strikes against the Islamic State militant group after a suspected IS suicide bomber kills 32 young activists at rally in Suruc, on the Syrian border, but also ends the ceasefire with the Kurdish rebel PKK following clashes in the southeast.

October: Turkey accuses Islamic State of twin suicide bomb attacks on Ankara peace rally by Kurds, in which about 100 people are killed.

November: Russia imposes economic sanctions after Turkey shoots down Russian warplane on Syria bombing mission.

European Union strikes controversial migration deal with Turkey. The flow of migration from Turkey into the EU will be restricted, and Turkey will receive 3 billion EUR in aid.

2016

February: Bomb attack on military convoy in the capital Ankara kills at least 38 people. A hard-line breakaway PKK faction – TAK – claims responsibility.

March: Authorities put Turkey's biggest newspaper – closely linked to Erdoğan rival Fethullah Gülen - under state control.

May: Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu resigns as prime minister after falling out with President Erdoğan.

June: Gun and suicide attack on Atatürk Airport Istanbul kills 42 people. The attack is believed to have been conducted by IS.

July: Turkish authorities detain thousands of soldiers and judges on suspicion of being involved in failed coup attempt. The government also shuts down dozens of media outlets.

August: President Erdoğan visits St. Petersburg for talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin, and the two pledge to restore economic ties that were damaged in the previous year.



December: Off-duty policeman kills Russian ambassador in apparent revenge for Russian air campaign in Syria. Turkey and Russia pledge to cooperate with Iran in fight against Islamic State in Syria.

2017

January: Gunman kills 39 people celebrating New Year at the Reina nightclub in Istanbul. The so-called Islamic State group says it was behind the attack.



ANNEX IV: RECOMMENDED READING

3RP, 'Regional Refugee & Resilience Plan 2015-2016: Turkey' (2016).

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September 2014).

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World Health Organization, 'WHO Field Presence in Gaziantep: Turkey Refugee Programme and Northern Syrian Response' (July 2016).