

Indicators Assessment- Unitary States

Turkey

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This Indicators Assessment report offers a country assessment of 4 composite indicators: (1) state-religious institutions relations, (2) status of religious minority groups, (3) religious radicalisation level, and (4) radicalisation prevention measures. It is part of a series covering 23 countries (listed below) on four continents. This assessment report was produced by GREASE, an EU-funded research project investigating religious diversity, secularism and religiously inspired radicalisation.

Countries covered in this series:

Albania, Australia, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Egypt, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Malaysia, Morocco, Russia, Slovakia, Spain, Tunisia, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

<https://www.grease.eu.eu>



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The EU-Funded GREASE project looks to Asia for insights on governing religious diversity and preventing radicalisation.

Involving researchers from Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Oceania, GREASE is investigating how religious diversity is governed in over 20 countries. Our work focuses on comparing norms, laws and practices that may (or may not) prove useful in preventing religious radicalisation. Our research also sheds light on how different societies cope with the challenge of integrating religious minorities and migrants. The aim is to deepen our understanding of how religious diversity can be governed successfully, with an emphasis on countering radicalisation trends.

While exploring religious governance models in other parts of the world, GREASE also attempts to unravel the European paradox of religious radicalisation despite growing secularisation. We consider the claim that migrant integration in Europe has failed because second generation youth have become marginalised and radicalised, with some turning to jihadist terrorism networks. The researchers aim to deliver innovative academic thinking on secularisation and radicalisation while offering insights for governance of religious diversity.

The project is being coordinated by Professor Anna Triandafyllidou from The European University Institute (EUI) in Italy. Other consortium members include Professor Tariq Modood from The University of Bristol (UK); Dr. H. A. Hellyer from the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) (UK); Dr. Mila Mancheva from The Centre for the Study of Democracy (Bulgaria); Dr. Egdunas Raciunas from Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania); Mr. Terry Martin from the research communications agency SPIA (Germany); Professor Mehdi Lahlou from Mohammed V University of Rabat (Morocco); Professor Haldun Gulalp of The Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (Turkey); Professor Pradana Boy of Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang (Indonesia); Professor Zawawi Ibrahim of The Strategic Information and Research Development Centre (Malaysia); Professor Gurpreet Mahajan of Jawaharlal Nehru University (India); and Professor Michele Grossman of Deakin University (Melbourne, Australia). GREASE is scheduled for completion in 2022.

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GREASE - Radicalisation, Secularism and the Governance of Religion: Bringing Together European and Asian Perspectives

Country Assessment Report

Name of Country Assessed: Turkey

I. Composite Indicator 1: State-Religious Institutions Relations

Overall Assessment:

Founded in 1923, the Turkish Republic's first Constitution (1924) stated that Islam is the religion of the state. This clause was removed in 1928, and was subsequently replaced by one that defined the state as "secular" in 1937. The characterization of the state as "secular" still remains in Article 2 of the [Constitution](#), and Article 24 protects "the freedom of conscience, religious belief and conviction."

Despite the principle of secularism in the constitution, however, Islam is a core component of Turkish national identity and, through the Presidency of Religious Affairs, according to Article 136 of the Constitution, the Islamic establishment is part of the state structure, with certain roles and privileges assigned, leaving other religions and denominations out of formal decision-making. From end of 2002 to the present, the role of religion and religious reasoning in political and state affairs has been gradually, but significantly, enhanced under the rule of the *AKP (Justice and Development Party)*, albeit without complete subordination of the state to a theocratic elite. [Legislation](#) passed in 2010 vastly expanded the scope of activities of the Presidency of Religious Affairs.

Although religiously-based political parties are unconstitutional in Turkey and the [Law on Political Parties](#) states that no political party may exploit or abuse religion or religious feelings by proposing to base the social, economic, political or legal order of the state, wholly or partly, on principles of religion or belief, religiously-based political parties have always existed in Turkey, but this has only been possible for the Islamic-based ones.

The legal framework allows the state to interfere in the internal affairs of non-Muslim communities, while supporting and regulating the affairs of the Muslim majority. While the [Treaty of Lausanne](#) (1923), which granted international recognition to Turkey's independence, stipulates in Articles 37-45 certain protections, primarily the freedom of religion, to the non-Muslims of Turkey without specifying communal identities, the Turkish government has always interpreted them to specifically cover only the three traditionally recognized *millets* (non-Muslim religious communities) of the Ottoman Empire, i.e., the Greek Orthodox, Jews and Armenians. For those minority faiths that are not formally recognized, such as other non-Muslim denominations or the Alevi sect of Islam, the state may interfere in their building places of worship and hence their freedom of religion.

1. State autonomy from religion	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(1a) Legal dimension: The Constitution/Basic law defines the state as secular	Very High	2020
(1b) Practical Dimension: Actual level of state political autonomy/independence from religion	Low	2020

2. Participation of religious institutions and religious groups in political decision-making and policy-making.	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(2a) Legal Dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant legislation forbids formal participation of religious institutions and religious groups in formal political decision-making.	High	2020
(2b) Practical Dimension: In practice, religious institutions and religious groups lack formal participation in political decision-making.	Medium	2020
3. Religiously-based political parties in political life.	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(3a) Legal Dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant legislation forbids participation of religiously-based political parties in political life.	Very High	2020
(3b) Practical Dimension: In practice, religiously-based political parties lack participation in political life.	Medium	2020
4. State non-interference in the regulation of religious matters of religious institutions and religious communities (including regulation of religious courts, councils, religious family laws, etc.).	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(4a) Legal Dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant legislation enforces state non-interference in the regulation of religious matters of religious institutions and religious communities.	High	2020
(4b) Practical Dimension: In practice, there is no state interference in the regulation of religious affairs of religious institutions and religious communities.	Medium	2020
5. State non-interference in the regulation of the administrative matters of religious institutions and religious communities (including personnel and funds).	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(5a) Legal dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant legislation enforces state non-interference in the regulation (e.g., personnel, financial matters) of the administrative matters of religious institutions and religious communities.	High	2020
(5b) Practical Dimension: In practice, there is no state interference in the regulation of the administrative affairs (e.g., personnel, financial, etc.) of religious institutions and religious communities.	Low	2020
6. State recognition of freedom of religion.	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(6a) Legal Dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant legislation allows freedom of religion.	Medium	2020
(6b) Practical Dimension: In practice, religious groups/communities enjoy freedom of religion.	Medium	2020

7. Freedom for religious groups/communities to set up and manage educational institutions.	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(7a) Legal dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant religious legislation allows religious groups/communities to set up and manage educational institutions.	Medium	2020
(7b) Practical Dimension: Religious groups/communities set up and manage educational institutions.	Medium	2020

8. Autonomy of religious media	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(8a) Legal dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant legislation recognises and allows religious media.	Medium	2020
(8b) Practical Dimension: In practice, religious media practice their activity.	Medium	2020

II. Composite Indicator 2: Status of Religious Minority Groups

Overall Assessment:

Very few religious minorities are formally recognized, and those that are, do not have “legal personality” and hence their recognition is subject to restrictions. Other minority groups, including numerous non-Muslim religious communities and those faiths or sects, such as the Alevi, that significantly differ from the Sunni majority, are also unrecognized, with serious restrictions on their social status and freedom of belief. Formally recognized minorities have the legal right to own their houses of worship, but without “legal personality” the ownership belongs to church foundations and have been subjected to confiscations in the past. While the Alevi and the unrecognized non-Muslim groups have no legal right to form (or own) houses of worship, they may in practice own and run them through their associations or foundations.

On the other hand, there are no formal restrictions over the political participation of individual citizens on the basis of their religious affiliation. Likewise, as “Everyone is equal before the law without distinction as to language, race, colour, sex, political opinion, philosophical belief, religion and sect, or any such grounds,” according to Article 10 of the [Constitution](#), no “special social security rights” are due to any minority group individuals and there are no restrictions on their access to public spaces. As for religious holidays, however, while the recognized communities may freely celebrate their holidays, only the Islamic ones count as official days off from work.

Finally, according to the [Lausanne Treaty](#), non-Muslim communities have the right to open their own educational institutions and are entitled to receive “public funds for educational, religious or charitable purposes.” But the practice significantly differs from the legal situation, because, first, the state has restricted the definition of “non-Muslim minorities” to include only the Greek, Armenian and Jewish communities, excluding many others that exist within society and, second, minority schools are governed within the framework of private schools, which means that they may only irregularly receive funding from the Ministry of Education.

1. Legal status of religious minority groups.	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(1a) Legal dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant religious legislation recognises religious minority groups.	Low	2020
(1b) Practical Dimension: In practice, religious minority groups enjoy legal registration status recognised by the government.	Medium	2020
2. Religious minority group participation in political life.	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(2a) Legal Dimension: Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant religious legislation grants religious minority groups rights to participate in the political life of the state.	Very High	2020
(2b) Practical Dimension: Religious minority groups participate in political life.	High	2020
3. Special social security status of religious minority groups.	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(3a) Legal Dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant religious legislation grants religious minority groups rights to special social security benefits.	Very Low	2020
(3b) Practical Dimension: In practice, religious minority groups have special access to social security benefits.	N/A	2020
4. Access of religious minority groups to public spaces.	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(4a) Legal Dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant religious legislation grants religious minority groups right of access to public spaces.	Very High	2020
(4b) Practical Dimension: Religious minority groups enjoy access to public spaces.	Very High	2020
5. Access to public funds for initiatives/activities of religious minority groups.	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(5a) Legal dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant religious legislation grants religious minority groups right of access to public funds for their own initiatives/activities.	Very High	2020
(5b) Practical Dimension: Religious minority groups have access to public funds for their own initiatives/activities.	Low	2020
6. Public accommodation of cultural practices specific to religious minority groups.	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(6a) Legal Dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant religious legislation allows public accommodation of cultural practices specific to religious minority groups.	Low	2020
(6b) Practical Dimension: Religious minority groups express their cultural practices publicly.	Low	2020

7. Ownership of houses of worship.	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(7a) Legal dimension: The Constitution/Basic law or other more relevant religious legislation grants religious minority groups rights to own their houses of worship.	Low	2020
(7b) Practical Dimension: Religious minority groups own houses of worship.	Low	2020

III. **Composite Indicator 3: Radicalisation Levels**

Overall assessment:

Structural indicators: Turkey was categorized as “partly free” between 2000 and 2015, but with a declining trend that started in 2014; the country entered the “not free” category from 2018. According to the Freedom House Report (2018), “Turkey’s status declined from Partly Free to Not Free due to a deeply flawed constitutional referendum that centralized power in the presidency, the mass replacement of elected mayors with government appointees, arbitrary prosecutions of rights activists and other perceived enemies of the state, and continued purges of state employees, all of which have left citizens hesitant to express their views on sensitive topics.” Likewise, Turkey’s Government Restrictions Index score has been gradually increasing since 2010. The main reason for this cannot be linked to a specific event, other than the general worsening trend of the government’s treatment of religious minorities. As to the State Legitimacy score, a significant worsening occurred in 2017, which is most likely due to the state of emergency declared by the government following the attempted coup of 2016. The year 2016 also shows a significant worsening score for the Protection of Human Rights, in addition to the gradual worsening after 2006.

Perception based indicators: Economic discontent is high (over 50%) and experienced a spike particularly after the economic crisis of 2008, but then was somewhat lowered again. Distrust in government institutions has also levelled off at around 30%, after a spike in 2010, but general discontent with politics remains close to 50%. About a quarter of the people believe that discrimination is widespread in the country, and (for 2006, the only year for which this information is available) 40% of the people express discomfort with living together with minorities. Following an increasing trend, (as of 2015) more than half of the people appeared concerned about extremism in the country, and (as of 2013) around 15% appeared to believe that violent extremism is justified. Both of these striking figures seem to be linked to the impact of the civil war in neighboring Syria.

Incidence based indicators: According to the Global Terrorism Index (2019), “Turkey remains the most affected country [in Europe], although its score did improve based on a 50 per cent reduction in attacks from 2017 to 2018. There were 95 incidents, resulting in 40 deaths, compared to 119 attacks and 123 deaths in 2017.” But there is no specific information on the number of religiously inspired terrorist incidents. While terrorist incidents have always been a concern in Turkey, mostly due to PKK activities, religiously motivated terrorism is a recent phenomenon. It was relatively low in 2010, but experienced a spike particularly in 2015. This was closely linked to the civil war in Syria and the rise of ISIS.

1. Structural factors/environment	Score/Level/Percentage	YEAR (Most Recent)
(1a) Level of Freedom	Classification: Not free Score: 32	2020
(1b) Level of adherence to rule of law	Overall rank: 107 (out of 128) Overall score: 0.43	2020
(1c) Level of religious-related government restrictions	Level: Very High Score: 7.1	2017
(1d) Level of state legitimacy	Level: Low Score: 7.5	2019
(1e) Level of protection of human rights	Level: Low Score: 8.1	2019
(1f) Level of group grievances	Level: High Score: 10	2019
(1g) Uneven economic development	Level: Moderate Score: 5.3	2019
(1h) Wealth disparity (top 10% possessing above average percentage of the total income share)	Percentage: 53.9%	2016
2. Perception-based indicators (social grievances)	Percentage (%)	YEAR (Most Recent)
(2a) Distrust in national institutions	Parliament: 32% Government: 33%	2019
(2b) Political discontent	Discontent with country direction: 48% Discontent with situation: 44% Discontent with democracy/government performance: 44%	2019
(2c) Economic discontent	Discontent own financial situation: 41% Discontent with country's economy: 55% Economic situation is the most serious problem: Not available	2019
(2d) Discrimination	Discrimination is widespread: 23.6% Opposing diversity: Not available Discomfort with minorities: 40% Experiencing discrimination: Not available	2018 2006
(2e) Views on violent extremism	VE is a serious problem/threat: Very concerned (19%), Somewhat concerned (37%)	2015 2013

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	Endorsement of VE actions/ actors: Rarely justified 17%, Sometimes justified 13%, Often justified 3%	
3. Incidence-based indicators (religious violence and conflict)	Score/Level/Number	YEAR (Most Recent)
(3a) State-based armed conflict	Yes	2018
(3b) Level of social hostilities involving religion	Level: High Score: 5.3	2017
(3c) Incidence and impact of terrorism	GTI Score: 6.53 Number of Incidents: 95	2018
(3d) Violent extremist incidents	Number of hate crimes: Recorded by police: Not available Prosecuted: 1983 Sentenced: 589	2018
(3e) Significant violent extremist actors/networks	Level: Medium	2020

IV. Composite Indicator 4: Radicalisation Prevention Measures

Overall assessment:

Religious-based violence was not a strategic concern in Turkey until 2015, as the government was primarily concerned with the PKK's terrorist acts. Following a series of apparently religious-based acts of mass violence in 2015, news reports appeared indicating the preparation of a comprehensive action plan by the government. But there is no clear evidence that such planning bore any fruit.

Regarding programs for supporting the victims of terrorist acts, Turkey passed the "[Law on the Compensation of Damages that Occurred Due to Terror and the Fight Against Terror](#)" in 2004, under pressure from the ECtHR and the Council of Europe, making it possible to compensate for the financial losses of the IDPs (internally displaced persons) caused by security operations against the PKK. While this law referred to the impact of "terrorism" in general, the government has been reluctant to implement it in cases other than PKK-related activities.

The question of interfaith dialogue between the state and religious leaders does not apply to Turkey, as the Presidency of Religious Affairs is already part of the state structure. As for the minority religions, many are not officially recognized; and those that are answer directly to the government. There is no formal platform whereby "religious leaders" interact with each other. In 2018, the Presidency of Religious Affairs announced the launch of a series of seminars around the nation, and publication of booklets, on the topic of "terror organizations that exploit religion." But there is no publicly available evidence about its implementation and level of success. Additionally, while there may be some NGOs that include such work among their educational activities, there is no evidence of a systematic network engaged in this kind of practice, in collaboration with or independently of the state.

As regards work in prison settings, an EU-supported project, named "[Better Management of Terrorists and Dangerous Offenders in Prisons and Prevention of Radicalization](#)," was

launched for this purpose in May 2019; but there is no publicly available evidence about its implementation and level of success.

1. Comprehensive strategic approach	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(1a) Legislative foundation for adoption of PVE action plan	Insufficient information	2020
(1b) Existence of PVE strategy and a national action plan	Insufficient information	2020
(1c) Presence of comprehensive monitoring mechanisms of strategy / action plan implementation	Insufficient information	2020
(1d) Presence of dedicated body tasked with PVE strategy development and coordination	Insufficient information	2020
(1e) Compliance of P/CVE strategy and action plan with human rights standards and the principles of rule of law	Insufficient information	2020
(1f) Participation of a wide range of government actors in development and implementation of PVE strategy and action plan	Insufficient information	2020
(1g) Participation of non-government actors in development and implementation of PVE strategy and action plan	Insufficient information	2020
(1h) Reference to FTFs and related measures in PVE strategy/action plan	Insufficient information	2020
(1i) Reference to terrorism financing and related measures in PVE strategy and action plan	Insufficient information	2020
(1j) Reference to communication counter- or alternative narrative campaigns in PVE strategy/action plan	Insufficient information	2020
2. Comprehensiveness of measures - areas of action, actors and projects	Score	YEAR (Most Recent)
(2a) Development and implementation of programmes for support of victims of terrorism and violent extremism	N/A	2020
(2b) Training for frontline practitioners	Insufficient information	2020
(2c) Initiatives to improve the preparedness of security forces, law enforcement and justice institutions to deal with radicalisation.	Insufficient information	2020
(2d) Development and implementation of P/CVE-specific education initiatives for youth	Insufficient information	2020
(2e) Development and implementation of P/CVE education initiatives and projects for women	Insufficient information	2020
(2f) Platforms for intra and interfaith dialogue between the state and religious leaders	N/A	2020
(2g) Networks for civil society, religious leaders, youth and women's organisations for dialogue, cooperation and best practices.	Insufficient information	2020
(2h) Grassroots initiatives by civil society actors focussed on prevention	Insufficient information	2020

(2i) Counter- and alternative- narrative campaigns	Insufficient information	2020
(2j) Multi-agency cooperation and/or referral mechanisms at local level identifying and supporting at-risk persons	Insufficient information	2020
(2k) State-commissioned research on religiously-inspired radicalisation and violent extremism	Insufficient information	2020
(2l) programs and measures to prevent radicalisation into violent extremism in prison and probation settings	Yes	2020

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