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16 September 2024

NGO Report on the Republic of Türkiye for the 142nd Session of the Human Rights Committee / Rapport des ONG sur la République de Turquie pour la 142ème session du Comité des droits de l'homme

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Introduction

1. The Centre for Voters Initiative & Action presents this report to the United Nations Human Rights Committee ahead of the 142nd Session for the review of the State of Türkiye. The Centre is a non-governmental organisation based in the Americas with an international focus. The Centre acknowledges there can be no secure tomorrow without ensuring youth have knowledge to vote, participate, and engage with the democratic processes.
2. The Centre works with multiple international mechanisms to convey dialogue, conduct research, and bring awareness to the thematic issues of electoral engagement around the world. We closely follow and participate in the United Nations human rights mechanisms in Geneva and abroad, including the Human Rights Committee.
3. The Centre submits this report ahead of the second periodic review of Türkiye under the International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights. Recognizing the complex challenges currently facing Türkiye, the Centre hopes to provide valuable information to the Committee on the State's compliance in areas such as civic participation, political violence, freedom of expression, and the treatment of marginalized groups. The Centre aims to promote the implementation of civic education policies and urges the Committee to address the lack of focus on youth civic engagement and the suppression of democratic participation in their concluding observations. As outlined in this report, fostering civic education and addressing human rights concerns are crucial steps toward rebuilding trust in Türkiye's democratic institutions.
4. This report focuses on four key violations: (1) political violence and election irregularities, leading to a lack of participation in the democratic process; (2) censorship and suppression of freedom of expression, particularly affecting journalists, activists, and marginalized groups such as the Kurdish population and LGBTQ+ communities; (3) the mistreatment of political prisoners and the use of torture and ill-treatment as a means of repression, particularly against opposition groups and ethnic minorities; and (4) the lack of self-determination and electoral representation available to Kurdish persons.
5. This report provides data and analysis to help the Committee in understanding Türkiye's social, political, and economic context, particularly regarding civic participation. However, a strong civic education foundation has the potential to address many of the issues outlined in this report, empowering the next generation to actively engage in democratic processes and rebuild a more inclusive, prosperous society.

Violation 1: Political Violence Resulting in Lack of Participation in the Democratic Process

Election Security

6. The issues surrounding election irregularities have become commonplace in Turkish elections since 1946.¹ These problems, however, have only exacerbated in recent years under Erdogan rule. False registries, recounted votes, and re-run elections have depreciated the legitimacy of the democratic process. In 2019, the legitimacy of the elections was brought to attention of the mainstream media when the High Electoral Board repeated in the 2019 Istanbul elections when the ruling party lost. However, the issue is not just fraud concerns but also includes violence and government intimidation at the polling stations.
7. Election forensic tools are instruments used to identify statistical traces of types of electoral fraud, created with the intent of maintaining the integrity and validity of elections. With the help of these tools, researchers found that in the 2023 election, there was an estimated 2.4% of electoral units affected by ballot stuffing malpractices in favour of Erdogan. In 2018, the number was estimated to be 8.5%. According to statistical models, it is assumed that the fraud resulted in approximately 342,000 additional ballots for Erdogan.²
8. The legitimacy of Turkey's elections in recent years is a direct violation of Article 25 of the ICCPR, which guarantees citizens the right to freely participate in genuine elections. Fair election is fundamental to a functioning democracy, to ensure the people's will is represented. The use of malpractice by the Turkish government doesn't just risk the creation of an authoritarian state, but also negatively affects public confidence in the democratic system. Absence of trust is sure to result in a lack of civic participation, reducing the power held by the electorate.

It is a fundamental democratic right for people to participate freely in elections, and therefore we respectfully ask the Committee to plan a reform of Turkey's High Electoral Board to ensure that it stays independent from current governmental influence. A restructuring of the framework of the organization to improve autonomy would improve transparency and prevent fraud allegations.

Suppression of Peaceful Protest

9. According to the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey, the use of political violence "has become part of daily life."³ Instances of suppression or intervention of peaceful protest and demonstration, ever since the adoption of the Law on Meetings and

¹ Orient Online. (2021, November 19). Election security in Turkey - Orient Online. <https://orient-online.com/shop/articles/election-security-in>.

² Klimek, P., Aykaç, A., & Thurner, S. (2023). Forensic analysis of the Turkey 2023 presidential election reveals extreme vote swings in remote areas. PLoS ONE, 18(11), e0293239. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0293239>.

³ Turkey (Türkiye) - United States Department of State. (2023c, December 7). United States Department of State. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/turkey/>.

Demonstrations on October 6, 1983, have only increased. The primary issue lays in how authorities utilize the use of force to combat such protests, such as frequently using excessive force, detaining protesters and resorting to torture and mistreatment.

10. There have been instances as recently as May 2024, where Turkish police detained 217 protesters in Istanbul on the annual May Day solidarity demonstration.⁴ To slow down the protests, police fired tear gas, rubber bullets and water cannons into the crowd as well.

11. The frequent use of unnecessary force to disperse peaceful congregation in recent years, along with the legalized limitation on protest and assembly rights embedded in the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations is in violation of article 21 and 22 of the Covenant. Suppression of peaceful protest, which is not only a basic human right but also a form of participation in political discourse, encourages a climate of fear and directly limits people's ability to express dissatisfaction.

In order to address the suppression of peaceful protest and maintain protection over Turkish citizens right to assembly, we kindly ask the Committee to inquire the State party over this issue, with particular emphasis on the implications and justifications for governmental actions taken in these events.

Improper Use of Social Media

12. Turkey, like most other nations in our modern era, utilize heavily social media amongst its people. However, the nation has been well known to misuse multiple platforms for a variety of reasons, such as virtual surveillance for 'terrorist propaganda', monitoring private online communications, enforcing nationwide values, and silencing political opponents such as the PKK, or those who ran against Erdogan. Out of the 84.98 million people who reside in Turkey, 68.5 million of them are active social media users, which means they access it at least once a month.⁵ This places social media as the most widespread form of media, which means government control and regulations reach every corner of the nation.

13. There has been a high number of instances of authorities using social media to detain people for posting media that concerned the government. The Human Rights Association reported that in the first 9 months of 2022, 90 individuals, including 1 child, were taken into custody on the grounds of their social media posts.⁶ Many of these instances, such as the trial of journalist Melis Alphan, were placed under the label of terrorist propaganda. Further, there have been 574,798 websites, 28,474

⁴ Reuters. "Turkish Police Fire Tear Gas, Detain Dozens of May Day Protesters in Istanbul." <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/turkish-police-fire-tear-gas-detain-dozens-may-day-protesters-istanbul-2024-05-01/>.

⁵ See Social Media in Turkey - 2023 Stats & Platform Trends - OOSGA. (n.d.). OOSGA. <https://oosga.com/social-media/tur/>.

⁶ Refer to footnote 3.

news articles and 5,436 news sites blocked by authorities in 2021 for 'falsification of information' that concerned the government.⁷ One famous example of this was after the 13 November terror attack on Istanbul, when all access to social media was shut down due to state-controlled internet companies and ability to access media servers.

14. There have also been numerous instances of the government using social media to restrain political opponents. Due to mass political suppression in protests and censorship in other types of media, many opposition parties relied on social media instead to connect with potential voters and supporters. However, the governments started using 'opposition leaders' social media postings to file criminal and civil complaints against them, alleging the defendants insulted the president and spread terrorist propaganda,' such as the investigation into CHP member of parliament Sezgin Tanrikulu for "insulting the Turkish state" after he addressed the Armenian genocide on social media.⁸

15. As we continue our global trend into modernization, the impact and use of social media will grow exponentially. The Centre reflects that experts declared that nearly 86.8% of the total population aged 18 and above used social media. Individuals aged between 16 to 24 especially stood out, reaching nearly 89%. Indeed, social media is a tool for youth to actively have forums to express their beliefs.⁹ Turkey's government has realized this and started 'targeting ordinary citizens who cannot be integrated into a depoliticized, conservative, and heteronormative cultural and moral ethos set by the government'.¹⁰ Social media has become a new way to target the freedom of expression in Turkey, along with the use of Penal Code Article 217, which is meant to prohibit the 'provocation of the public to disobey the law.' These practices of surveillance and suppression infringe on Article 19, which protects freedom of expression and Article 21, which safeguards the right to peaceful assembly. The key issue here is the resulting discouragement of civic engagement and culture of fear promoted, along with the already diminishing citizen participation in the democratic process, which is slowly turning authoritarian under Erdogan.

We urge the Committee to push the State party to implement a reformation of the internet use laws in Turkey, which may be hard to complete under the current regime, recognising that social media is an active forum for youth and that suppressing it may limit participation as due under Article 25 in public affairs. Another solution that would take significant effort would be to take an approach like those in other countries in which it is enforced that social media platforms are regulated independently, and only act as a forum for the government to communicate not control.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Refer to Simon Kem's Digital 2024 Report on Turkey, published 23 February 2024. Access here: <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2024-turkey>.

¹⁰ Ruacan, I. Z. (2022c). The systematic decline of the freedom of expression in Turkey. In A Policy Brief Series From Freedom House: Vol. No. 4. <https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/2022>.

Violation 2: Suppression of Kurdish Involvement in Politics Leading to Disparities in Self-Determination and Electoral Representation

Restricted Self-Determination and Political Marginalization

16. The Kurdish population, which makes ~20% of Türkiye's total population, has been fundamentally denied the right to self-determination; the State party's refusal to grant any political autonomy or recognise Kurdish cultural and linguistic rights further exacerbates their isolation.¹¹ The Kurdish population continues to face significant barriers to participation in the political process. This lack of self-determination is most evident in the criminalization of Kurdish political movements and censorship of Kurdish media.
17. Perhaps the most damaging restriction of the State party's self-determination of the Kurds was the closure of Kurdish-language schools and educational centres following the failed 2016 coup attempt. Kurdish educational centres, which provided essential cultural and linguistic training, were shut down under the broad application of counter-terrorism measures.¹² This suppression of Kurdish language and culture not only isolates Kurdish children from their culture but also ensures that they remain disconnected from the political process. Without access to language, culture, and knowledge fundamental to making one's voice heard (meaningful civics education), Kurdish persons, especially young boys and girls, find it increasingly difficult to engage in the democratic process, further marginalising their voices.

The Committee should inquire about Türkiye's policies regarding the closure of Kurdish educational centres and demand that the government outline its approach to ensuring the linguistic and cultural rights of the Kurdish population are respected, in accordance with the Covenant's 25th and 27th articles. Understanding that education is a core pillar to a secure tomorrow, the Committee should further aim to push for the establishment of new Kurdish education centres to facilitate future prosperity.

The Committee should urge the re-opening of civic education institutions for youth nationwide to enable education about the ability for all persons, regardless of who they are, to participate in the public affairs process. Civics education early is a tool for youth prosperity; it is essential that the Turkish government enables these programmes to become possible. The Committee must probe the State on its current status on civic educational institutions, and if not satisfied, recommend the implementation of more civic education centres and programmes.

¹¹ See Rez Gardi's publication on "From Suppression to Secession: Kurds, Human Rights, and the Right to Self-Determination in Turkey. Note Gardi's assertion that "the effect of Turkey's reservation in practice means the exclusion of its application to Kurds."

<https://nsuworks.nova.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1969&context=ilsajournal>

¹² Refer to <https://www.newarab.com/analysis/kurdish-schools-shut-down-turkey>.

Targeted Abuse and Intimidation of Kurdish Political Figures

18. In Türkiye, Kurdish political figures and activists have been consistently targeted by the State party under the pretext of affiliations with the KPP. These individuals, many of whom are members of the People's Democratic Party / HDP, have faced systemic abuse, mistreatment, and imprisonment on charges of terrorism; this has become a common tactic to stifle Kurdish political representation. Take Selahattin Demirtaş, a former co-chair of the HDP and one of the most prominent Kurdish political leaders, for example. Despite a European Court of Human Rights advocating for his release, Demirtaş has remained imprisoned since 2016 on terrorism-related charges, which are widely viewed as politically motivated.¹³
19. The persecution of Kurdish political figures is not an isolated incident but part of a broader pattern of repression against Kurdish self-determination. Many HDP members and elected officials have been arrested, while Kurdish mayors in southeastern Türkiye have been removed from office and replaced by Turkish government political appointees.¹⁴ These actions, which are justified under the idea of Turkish national security – essentially allowing broad, unchecked power – have severely undermined the democratic process by preventing the free participation in public affairs. Political repression contributes to a culture of fear among Kurdish communities and discourages civic participation.
20. In a 2019 local election, over 65 HDP mayors were removed from their elected positions and replaced with state-appointed administrators.¹⁵ This removal of legitimate Kurdish political representation does not only deprive Kurdish citizens of their right to choose their own leaders through suffrage but also reflects the State party's efforts to diminish Kurdish influence in its electoral landscape. These actions are ultimately to reduce the self-determination of the Kurdish under the Covenant's first article, creating an environment where Kurdish people are denied meaningful political representation, thereby interlinking the rights to self-determination with participation in the process of public affairs.

Political Violence and Intimidation of Kurdish Voters

21. Political violence and intimidation are widespread during election periods, particularly in Kurdish-majority areas of south-eastern Türkiye. In the 2018 elections, reports of voter suppression and intimidation targeting Kurdish communities were rampant.¹⁶ The polling stations in these areas were guarded heavily and voters were often met with the presence of armed forces. Many Kurdish voters were either intimidated into not voting or discouraged from doing so due to the hostile environment, effectively establishing a culture of fear which prevented Turkish

¹³ Refer to the human rights commission report from the United States House of Representatives (fascinating read, recommended): <https://humanrightscommission.house.gov/defending-freedom-project/Countries/Turkey/Selahattin-Demirtas>.

¹⁴ Human Rights Watch, "Turkey: 3 Kurdish Mayors Removed from Office", 20 August 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/08/20/turkey-3-kurdish-mayors-removed-office>.

¹⁵ Human Rights Watch, "Turkey: Kurdish Mayors' Removal Violates Voters' Rights", 10 February 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/02/07/turkey-kurdish-mayors-removal-violates-voters-rights>.

¹⁶ Ibid.

citizens (though they may not be Turkish in nature) from expressing their rights granted under the 25th article of the Covenant.

22. The HDP, the pro-Kurdish political party, has been consistently targeted by Turkish authorities.¹⁷ In the 2023 elections, HDP candidates faced arrests, harassment, and accusations of terrorism; however, this pattern of intimidation is not new. In the 2015 general elections, HDP offices were attacked by nationalist groups days before the election, and polling stations in Kurdish city Diyarbakır were patrolled by police forces known for using excessive force against Kurdish citizens.¹⁸ This intimidation skewedly affects Kurdish communities, further exacerbating their separation from the political process.

23. In many Kurdish-majority areas, voter turnout has been significantly lower than the national average due to these systemic acts of violence and intimidation. Such targeted suppression of Kurdish voters undermines the democratic process and ensures that the voices of these marginalized communities are not heard.

The Committee should press Türkiye to address the systemic voter intimidation in Kurdish regions and provide assurances that future elections will be free of police intimidation and nationalist violence. The Committee should also urge the Turkish government to establish independent election observers to monitor elections in Kurdish-majority areas and ensure that voters are able to participate freely and fairly.

Recommendation: Reservation Acts

24. While the Centre does not typically allocate entire subsections of our report, we believe a unique solution must be highlighted to fundamentally address the weak, misrepresented Kurdish population in Turkish government. During the 141st session, Ms. Hélène Tigroudja, Independent Committee Member from France, took particular interest in the Centre's submission.¹⁹ She engaged with Assistant Director Ms. Antonia Gouvis in strategizing solutions for the lack of empowerment of young girls. Thanks to the Centre's efforts, civics education was presented as a feasible solution to the issues faced. The Committee noted its "regret that the Women's Reservation Bill, 2023, will only come into force in 2029, after the completion of the census and ratification by the majority of states and will reserve only one third of seats for women in the Lok Sabha, the state legislative assemblies and legislative assembly".²⁰

25. To address the long-standing political marginalization of the Kurdish population, Türkiye should consider implementing a Kurdish Political Reservation Act, like the

¹⁷ Meghan Bodette, "The Pro-Kurdish Political Movement in Turkey", Kurdish Peace Institute. Published 23 May 2022 at <https://www.kurdishpeace.org/research/democracy/the-pro-kurdish-political-movement-in-turkey/>.

¹⁸ U.S. Department of State, "2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Turkey (Türkiye)", <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/turkey/>.

¹⁹ Refer to <https://www.cvia.ch/post/concluding-observations-on-india-ccpr-141st-session>.

²⁰ Refer to CCPR/C/IND/CO/4 from the 141 session of CCPR.

Centre's recommendation for the India's Women Reservation Act. This policy would ensure that a percentage of seats in the National Assembly and local government bodies are reserved specifically for Kurdish representatives, thereby guaranteeing Kurdish participation in the political process.

26. Such an act would create opportunities for Kurdish political engagement, empowering Kurdish communities to have a direct role in shaping national policies. A reservation system would ensure that Kurdish issues, particularly regarding language, education, and political rights are embodied in Türkiye's representatives.

We strongly urge that the Committee should recommend that Türkiye explore this reservation model to address the political exclusion of the Kurdish population and ensure that their right to self-determination is respected under the CCPR's first article.

Violation 3: Treatment of Marginalized Groups

Inability of Marginalized Groups to Access Linguistic and Educational Resources

27. Turkey only recognizes three non-Muslim minorities within their constitution, Armenian Apostolic Christians, Jews, and Greek Orthodox Christians. This has resulted in other ethnic, religious and national minorities, such as the Kurdish, Arabs and Assyrians being unable to fully exercise certain linguistic, religious and cultural rights. There has been a constant state of suppression specifically on the Kurdish tongue, which is strictly prohibited in education, politics, and media under the constitution.²¹ Although discrimination is based demographics such as language and race are illegal, it is prevalent amongst Turkish authorities to lack enforcement in such provisions, as the state unfortunately views unique cultural richness as a threat to country's existence and unity.
28. The educational rights of the Kurdish specifically have been a point of controversy within the country. After the failed military coup in 2016, Kurdish access to education facilities immediately shuttered. According to the Turkish Constitution, after October 2014, "No language other than Turkish shall be taught as a mother tongue to Turkish citizens at any institution of education".²² This is essentially an ethnic cleansing by the Turkish government in schools, limiting the ability for Kurds to protect their culture through public Turkish institutions. There is not a single nationally recognized school in all of Turkey that utilises the Kurdish language as its primary language, despite the nation consisting of a little less than 20% of people coming from Kurdish origin.
29. The Kurdish newspaper *Hevi* – which has been publishing since 1996 – has been under constant pressure since its establishment. To date, of all the issues published,

²¹ Turkey: Kurds Continue to be Denied Political and Cultural Rights. (2021, August 10). Human Rights Watch. <https://www.hrw.org/news/1999/05/28/turkey-kurds-continue-be-denied-political-and-cultural-rights>.

²² Refer to footnote 12.

only 3 have not been confiscated. There have also been many Turkish governmental attempts to outright deny the existence of Kurdish ethnicity completely and replace it with a 'murky Turkish genealogy.'²³

30. The restriction on education and linguistic freedoms for such a significant minority population is a direct violation of Article 27 of the Covenant and has already led to numerous occasions of increased tension and conflict. Denial of Kurdish educational and media practices induces a direct disconnection between a significant portion of the population from the political process, which has resulted in limited representation of Kurdish issues. Without complete education or ability to utilize their own mother tongue, Kurdish people, and children especially, are blatantly left without protection of their interests, which leads to limitation of participation in the civic process. Children are left uneducated about the intricacies of the political process, and forced to digest information not pertaining to their way of life. Indeed, violations under Article 27 have interconnected implications surrounding abilities for minorities to participate in the public affairs process, hence creating instability in the effectiveness of the Covenant's 25th article.

We politely urge the Committee to ask of the government, after conflict disperses, the extent to which it is working to expand Kurdish language in media and education. This would allow Kurdish children to ensure they may be ready to participate properly in the political process while preserving their cultural identity. Furthermore, the Committee should probe the status of educational opportunities for non-Turkish civil society.

Treatment of LGBTQ+

31. The treatment of LGBTQ+ persons in Turkey has never been accepting, but under the current regime, the situation has only deteriorated. Violence, discrimination, and restrictions on freedom to express, associate and peacefully assemble have become commonplace in Turkey over the course of the past few years. This is due to the turkey's lack of legal recognition for some of the most essential LGBTQ+ rights, such as same-sex marriage, civil unions or domestic partnership benefits. In 2022, ILGA-Europe ranked Turkey 48th out of 49 countries in terms of LGBTQ+ equality.²⁴
32. Violence against those in the LGBTQ+ community is rampant. From June 2010 to June 2014, there were 41 reported hate murders against those in the community, but the real number is actually much higher as the Turkish courts tend to label many of these hate murders against LGBTQ+ persons as not related to hate at all.²⁵ Further, the judicial system has often used the ambiguity of Article 29 of the Turkish

²³ Human Rights Watch, "IX. RESTRICTIONS ON THE USE OF THE KURDISH LANGUAGE", <https://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/turkey/turkey993-08.htm>.

²⁴ Garry, J. (2023, June 8). What LGBTQ travelers need to know before visiting Turkey. *Lonely Planet*. <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/news/turkey-travel-lgbtq-advice>.

²⁵ Kaos GL Association. Human Rights Violations of LGBT Individuals in Turkey: 2014 Report. <https://kaosglidernegi.org/images/library/2014human-rights-violations-of-lgbt-individuals-in-turkey.pdf>.

Criminal Code to reduce the sentences of those who have killed LGBTQ+ persons.²⁶ The violence however, is not just limited to physical altercations. Results of a study by the Association for Progressive Communication found that 90% of all LGBTQ+ individuals in Turkey have been victims to hate speech and digital violence, which has been exacerbated by the lack of legal processes.²⁷

33. The treatment of LGBTQ+ people in Turkey has denied many citizens basic rights and freedoms, which in turn has promoted a climate of fear and discrimination. These practices violate several articles of the Covenant, including Article 2, 26, 19 and 21. Regarding the electoral process, authorities and other political parties often leverage anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric to garner support, and prevent the inclusion of LGBTQ+ voices in the democratic process. Many LGBTQ+ persons also live in fear of government retaliation if they are to voice their opinions, which leads directly to a lack of civic engagement amongst a large percentage of LGBTQ+ persons.

In order pursue the equality of LGBTQ+ persons, we politely ask of the Committee to push for the strengthening of legal protection against discrimination, starting with simple legal adjustments, such as including LGBTQ+ specific amendments in laws about employment and education making it easier to protect LGBTQ+ rights without overhauling the entire legal framework.

Recommendations

34. The human rights violations in Türkiye, outlined in this report, represent a concerning trend which could impact civil society. The increased suppression of political dissent, marginalisation of Kurdish citizens, restriction of fundamental freedoms, and inability to properly represent certain marginalised group indicate a weakening of democratic participation. Should these violations continue without meaningful action, the State party's actions will inevitably continue, and the civics strength for the country will likely decrease.
35. To ensure that the rights of all Turkish citizens are protected, we call on the Committee to take the following actions in its concluding observations and in the interactive dialogue with the State party:
- It is a fundamental democratic right for people to participate freely in elections, and therefore we respectfully ask the Committee to plan a reform of Turkey's High Electoral Board to ensure that it stays independent from current governmental influence. A restructuring of the framework of the organization to improve autonomy would improve transparency and prevent fraud allegations.

²⁶ European Commission, supra note 2.

²⁷ New study finds that violence against LGBTQI+ communities in Turkey has increased through online platforms | Association for Progressive Communications. (n.d.). <https://www.apc.org/en/press/new-study-finds-violence-against-lgbtqi-communities-turkey-has-increased-through-online>.

- In order to address the suppression of peaceful protest and maintain protection over Turkish citizens' right to assembly, we kindly ask the Committee to inquire the State party over this issue, with particular emphasis on the implications and justifications for governmental actions taken in these events.
- Push the State party to implement a reformation of the internet use laws in Turkey, which may be hard to complete under the current regime, recognising that social media is an active forum for youth and that suppressing it may limit participation as due under Article 25 in public affairs. Another solution that would take significant effort would be to take an approach like those in other countries in which it is enforced that social media platforms are regulated independently, and only be a forum for government to communicate not control.
- Inquire about Türkiye's policies regarding the closure of Kurdish educational centres and demand that the government outline its approach to ensuring the linguistic and cultural rights of the Kurdish population are respected, in accordance with the Covenant's 25th and 27th articles. Understanding that education is a core pillar to a secure tomorrow, the Committee should further aim to push for the establishment of new Kurdish education centres to facilitate future prosperity.
- Press Türkiye to address the systemic voter intimidation in Kurdish regions and provide assurances that future elections will be free of police intimidation and nationalist violence. The Committee should also urge the Turkish government to establish independent election observers to monitor elections in Kurdish-majority areas and ensure that voters are able to participate freely and fairly.
- Recommend that Türkiye explore India's Parliamentary Reservation model to address the political exclusion of the Kurdish population and ensure that their right to self-determination is respected under the CCPR's first article.
- Strongly urge the re-opening of civic education institutions for youth nationwide to enable education about the ability for all persons, regardless of who they are, to participate in the public affairs process. Civic education early is a tool for youth prosperity; it is essential that the Turkish government enables these programmes to become possible. The Committee must probe the State on its current status on civic educational institutions, and if not satisfied, recommend the implementation of more civic education centres and programmes.
- Ask of the Turkish State party, after conflict disperses, the extent to which it is working to expand Kurdish language in media and education. This would allow Kurdish children to ensure they may be ready to participate properly in the political process while preserving their cultural identity. Furthermore, the Committee should probe the status of educational opportunities for non-Turkish civil society.
- Strengthen legal protection against discrimination, starting with simple legal adjustments, such as including LGBTQ+ specific amendments in laws about employment and education making it easier to protect LGBTQ+ rights without overhauling the entire legal framework.

Conclusion

36. The human rights challenges facing Türkiye, particularly in the areas of political violence, freedom of expression, and the marginalisation of Kurdish citizens and other minority groups, remain deeply concerning to the Centre. Despite recent efforts to address these issues through reforms, the targeted repression of opposition voices and suppression of Kurdish involvement in politics remain. These systemic violations restrict civic participation and erode public trust in Türkiye's democratic institutions, undermining the rights guaranteed under the Covenant.
37. Moving forward, Türkiye must prioritise ending the repression of political opposition and protecting the right to peaceful protest, as well as ensuring inclusive participation in the political process for all citizens. By fostering a culture of civic engagement and respect for fundamental rights, Türkiye can work toward a more democratic and inclusive society where the voices of all citizens are heard.
38. We thank the Committee for the opportunity to highlight the human rights situation in Türkiye, and we trust that these insights will inform the review process. We hope that the Committee will recognise the critical role of civic education and political inclusivity in ensuring a more stable and equitable future for Türkiye. Specifically, in ensuring all children receive civics education – even the Kurdish – to ensure future prosperity. We look forward to the interactive dialogue that will follow.
39. This submission may be published on the OHCHR website, or any other platforms deemed necessary. For any inquiries regarding this submission, kindly contact primary contributors Pritish Chemakura (pchemakura@cvia.ch) and Samad Quraishi (squraishi@cvia.ch).