

# Turkey

## *Ethnicity in Turkey*

### *Historical overview*

As the successor state of the multiethnic Ottoman Empire, the Turkish Republic evolved with a profound legacy of heterogeneity on its shoulders. Discriminatory policies against certain groups of the population based on their ethnicity are hence widely regarded as a continuation of measures taken in the late Ottoman Empire and aimed at the same direction, “namely minority assimilation or (even) emigration” (3556, 911ff). Despite being (partly) recognized and protected by the Lausanne Treaty, (...) most of the minorities of Turkey faced persistent discrimination (cf. 3557, 128). Tolerance towards minorities did not characterize republican Turkish politics (cf. 3558).

3556 [Bora, 2002]

3557 [Grigoriadis, 2009]

3558 [Turan, 1984]

### *Group selection*

The group sizes have been chosen according to the CIA World Fact Book (3559): Turkish 70-75%, Kurdish 18%, other minorities 7-12% (2008). The Turkish ethnic group is clearly dominant in terms of its size whereas both the Kurdish, being the second biggest ethnic group as well as the Roma are listed due to their relative size and the state-led discrimination both have witnessed throughout the whole period of observation.

3559 [Central Intelligence Agency, 2008]

### *Power relations*

*The Turks:* After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the modernist Muslim elites associated with the state and began to search for “ethnic roots of the founders of the Ottoman state and eventually concluded that they were Turks” (3560, 3). That Turkish was “the language of the state and a large section of the population, also helped turn Turkishness into a political category” (ibid.). Non-Turkish Muslims are considered part of the Turkish nation, “but only as long as they are willing to assimilate and embrace Turkishness” (3561, 32). In practice, “ethnicity is (thus) an important component in the definition of the Turkish nation” (ibid.). “The Turkish Constitution does not acknowledge the presence of minority languages. At the same time, it provides public funding for the preservation and promotion of the Turkish language, history, and culture” (3562, 15). As the judicial framework explicitly grants social

3560 [Karpas, 2004]

3561 [Lundgren, 2007]

3562 [?]

and political privileges to Turks according to the aforementioned definition, the Turkish ethnic group is coded as having monopoly power.

*The Kurds:* With 18% the Kurds comprise almost one fifth of the whole population in Turkey. However, due to the long standing policy of Turkification, a process of substantial assimilation controlled by the Turkish Republic, it is rather difficult to measure the exact size of the Kurdish ethnic group in Turkey. Until 1991, this policy had denied the very existence of a distinct Kurdish ethnicity. Kurds explicitly suffer from discrimination that includes serious restrictions on the use of their language and any expression of their culture, as well as on political organizing. The political life of Kurds in Turkey is problematic with displays of “Kurdishness” being restricted (cf. <sup>3563</sup>). Nevertheless there have been several attempts to organize in the political arena: in 1990, ten pro-Kurdish members of parliament broke off from the Social Democrats and founded the People’s Labor Party (HEP). In 1993 the HEP was outlawed, just like its successors the Democratic Labor Party (DEP) in 1994 (cf. <sup>3564</sup>, 866) as well as the “ethnic Kurdish“ People Democratic Labor Party (HADEP) in 2003 (<sup>3565</sup>, 40). Despite of a slight improvement in the judicial framework in the recent years, the Kurdish ethnic group is coded as "discriminated".

<sup>3563</sup> [Minorities at Risk Project, 2009]

<sup>3564</sup> [Bozarslan, 2002]

<sup>3565</sup> [Kalaycioglu Carkoglu, 2007]

*The Roma:* As for the Kurds, estimations about the actual size of the Roma ethnic group in Turkey differ acutely. Several legislative provisions in the Turkish judiciary single out Roma for “discriminatory treatment” (<sup>3566</sup>, 4). Until its abrogation in 2006, the Law on Settlement stated at Article 4 that “those that are not bound to the Turkish culture, anarchists, migrant gypsies, spies and those that have been deported, are not recognized as migrants” (ibid). In September 2002, Turkey ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. In this Convention, “Ethnicity is not mentioned specifically as a prohibited ground of unequal treatment in Turkey, which limits the legal protections against discrimination afforded Roma in Turkey. In practice, Roma in Turkey are regularly subjected to discrimination in almost all aspects of their lives” (ibid). Given these facts, the Roma ethnic group is coded as "discriminated".

<sup>3566</sup> [European Roma Rights Centre, 2009]

*2010-2013 update:* The consulted sources still report clear evidence for state-led discrimination against the Kurds (Freedom House, 2011; 3567; 3568). The situation has somewhat improved in 2012 and especially in 2013 after the beginning of the so-called “solution process” (3569), yet it appears safe to me to code the Kurds as discriminated until and including 1 January 2013.

Considering the Roma in Turkey, Erdogan’s AKP regime has engaged in a so-called “Romani Opening” since late 2009/early 2010. For the first time, the discrimination of Roma was officially acknowledged as a problem and the government announced efforts to improve the situation. In fact though, not enough has effectively changed since then to no longer code the Roma as discriminated (3570; Gençoglu-Onbasi, 2012; 3571).

<sup>3567</sup> [Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2012]

<sup>3568</sup> [US Department of State, 2014]

<sup>3569</sup> [US Department of State, 2014]

<sup>3570</sup> [European Commission, 2013]

<sup>3571</sup> [US Department of State, 2014]

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## *Political status of ethnic groups in Turkey*

*From 1946 until 2013*

Group name	Proportional size	Political status
Turkish	0.75	MONOPOLY
Kurds	0.18	DISCRIMINATED
Roma	0.0066	DISCRIMINATED



Figure 775: Political status of ethnic groups in Turkey during 1946-2013.

## *Geographical coverage of ethnic groups in Turkey*

*From 1946 until 2013*

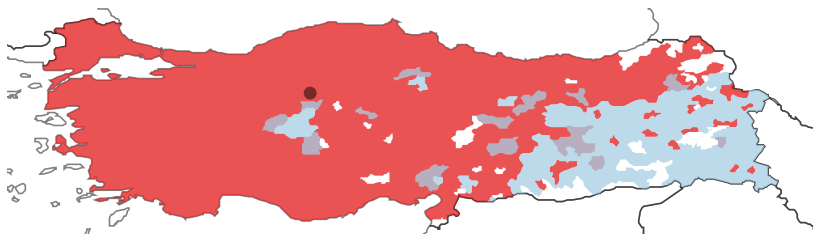


Figure 776: Map of ethnic groups in Turkey during 1946-2013.

Group name	Area in km <sup>2</sup>	Type
<span style="color: orange;">■</span> Turkish	608 937	Statewide
<span style="color: blue;">■</span> Kurds	162 421	Regional & urban
<span style="color: orange;">■</span> Roma		Migrant

Table 223: List of ethnic groups in Turkey during 1946-2013.



## *Conflicts in Turkey*

*Starting on 1974-06-20*

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Cyprus	Government of Turkey		1974-06-20			

*Starting on 1983-05-01*

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Turkey	PKK	Kurds	1983-05-01	Explicit	Yes	Yes

*Starting on 1987-12-31*

Side A	Side B	Group name	Start	Claim	Recruitment	Support
Government of Turkey	Devrimci Sol		1987-12-31			
Government of Turkey	MKP		1987-12-31			