



DEBATE PACK

CDP 2018-0135 | 1 June 2018

Early elections, human rights and the political situation in Turkey

Main Chamber

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Debate nominated by the
Backbench Business Committee

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The House of Commons Library prepares a briefing in hard copy and/or online for most non-legislative debates in the Chamber and Westminster Hall other than half-hour debates. Debate Packs are produced quickly after the announcement of parliamentary business. They are intended to provide a summary or overview of the issue being debated and identify relevant briefings and useful documents, including press and parliamentary material. More detailed briefing can be prepared for Members on request to the Library.

1. Background

Presidential and Parliamentary elections will take place in Turkey on 24 June.

The next Presidential race was originally scheduled to be held in November 2019, but in a surprise move President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan called early elections for both institutions.

These elections will be the first to be held under Turkey's new constitutional arrangements, which were narrowly approved in a referendum in April 2017.

The changes will turn Turkey's current Parliamentary system into a Presidential one. The President will head the executive branch of government, and will have powers to issue decrees with the force of law, prepare budgets, dissolve parliament, and appoint ministers and some top judges.

The election will take place under a state of emergency that has been imposed since July 2016, when a military coup was launched against President Erdoğan. The Government blamed the coup on followers of the exiled Turkish Islamic cleric Fethullah Gülen. The state of emergency suspends some of the normal functions of the constitution and derogates from many provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights.

A recent report from the UN's High Commissioner for Human Rights, warns that the state of emergency has facilitated the deterioration of the human rights situation and the erosion of the rule of law in Turkey. It says:

The sheer number, frequency and lack of connection of several [emergency] decrees to any national threat seem to...point to the use of emergency powers to stifle any form of criticism or dissent vis-à-vis the Government.¹

Other key findings in the report include:

- nearly 160,000 people have been arrested during the 18-month state of emergency; and 152,000 civil servants dismissed, many totally arbitrarily;
- twenty-two emergency decrees were promulgated by the end of 2017, with many regulating matters unrelated to the state of emergency and used to limit various legitimate activities by civil society actors;
- the use of torture and ill-treatment in custody, including severe beatings, threats of sexual assault and actual sexual assault,

¹ United Nations- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, '[Turkey: UN report details extensive human rights violations during protracted state of emergency](#)', 20 March 2018

electric shocks and waterboarding by police, gendarmerie, military police and security forces;

- 300 journalists have been arrested on the grounds that their publications contained “apologist sentiments regarding terrorism” or other “verbal act offences” or for “membership” in terrorist organisations;
- over 100,000 websites were reportedly blocked in 2017, including a high number of pro-Kurdish websites and satellite TV channels.²

There are six candidates running for President. The four most significant ones are:

- President Erdoğan, leader of the governing AK Party, who has been in power (first as Prime Minister and then as President) since 2002, and who remains Turkey’s most popular politician.
- Muharrem Ince, former school principal and staunch nationalist, who has been an MP for the centre-left Republican People’s Party (CHP) since 2002.
- [Meral Akşener](#), leader of the new nationalist İyi (Good) party she founded in October 2017, and former member of the ultra-nationalist Nationalist Movement Party (MHP).
- Selahattin Demirtaş, of the left-wing pro-Kurdish Peoples’ Democratic party (HDP). An MP since 2007, Demirtaş was imprisoned by the state in November 2016.

While polls indicate Mr Erdoğan may struggle to achieve the more than 50% of the vote he requires for a first-round victory, he is expected to beat any candidate in the second round run-off. Analysts believe the state of emergency does not allow a level playing field for opposition candidates. The AKP government also recently announced a \$6 billion incentives package, including cash payments to pensioners, which opponents have denounced as “election bribery.”³

Opposition candidates have complained of media blackouts of their campaigns, and questioned the integrity of the state body – the RTÜK which is supposed enforce Turkey’s strict laws on fair media coverage during elections.⁴

In the Parliamentary elections, the four main opposition parties, the Republican People’s Party (CHP), İyi (Good) Party, the Islamist Felicity Party and the small centre-right Democrat Party, have banded together to form a coalition. This move will allow them to get over the high threshold required of parties to enter the parliament – 10% of the vote. Erdoğan’s AK Party have entered a coalition with the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP).

² Ibid.

³ [‘Turkish opposition parties to sign four-way election alliance’](#), Middle East Eye, 2 May 2018.

⁴ [‘Erdoğan Challengers Decry Media Blackout Before Election’](#), VOA News, 9 May 2018.

2. Press Articles

The following is a selection of press and media articles relevant to this debate.

Please note: the Library is not responsible for either the views or accuracy of external content.

[Is It Time to Carve Turkey Out of NATO?](#)

The American Conservative
Doug Bandow
24 May 2018

[In Erdoğan's warped world, even intellectuals are now 'terrorists'](#)

The Guardian
Kenan Malik
20 May 2018

[Post-Brexit, the UK will need Turkey for trade – and Erdogan is using that to his advantage](#)

Independent
Kim Sengupta
14 May 2018

[Britain Should use Erdogan Visit to Speak out on Human Rights](#)

Human Rights Watch
David Mepham
12 May 2018

[UK has sold \\$1bn of weapons to Turkey since coup attempt](#)

Middle East Eye
Jamie Merrill
11 May 2018

[Turkish court sentences journalists to long jail terms](#)

Financial Times (Subscription required)
Ayla Jean Yackley
26 April 2018

[Erdogan calls snap elections in Turkey amid crackdown on dissent](#)

Daily Telegraph
Kristina Jovanovski
18 April 2018

[EU: Turkey's membership hopes at an all-time low](#)

Deutsche Welle
15 April 2018

[The Turkish constitutional referendum, explained](#)

Brookings
Sinan Ekim and Kemal Kirişçi
13 April 2018

[Turkey just snatched six of its citizens from another country](#)

Washington Post
Nate Schenkkan
1 April 2018

[Turkey denies using chemical weapons against Kurds in Syria](#)

Times of Israel
17 February 2018

[Arming Turkey Breaks U.K. Arms Export Laws, This Is Why](#)

News Week
Lloyd Russell-Moyle
2 February 2018

[Turkey among world's worst for rule of law – World Justice Project](#)

Ahval
31 January 2018

[Turkey arrests hundreds for criticising Afrin offensive](#)

BBC News
29 January 2018

['It's just the start': LGBT community in Turkey fears government crackdown](#)

The Guardian
Carmen Fishwick
23 November 2017

[Turkey's War on Christianity Is No Holy War—It's a Power Grab by a Brutal Dictator](#)

Observer
John A. Tures
27 July 2017

[How President Erdogan hopes to erase Ataturk's Turkey](#)

The Spectator
Rose Asani
5 August 2016

3. Gov.uk

PM statement with President Erdogan
Prime Minister's Office, 10 Downing Street
15 May 2018

President Erdogan, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you to Downing Street today.

The UK-Turkey relationship is indispensable.

The issues we have discussed underline just how important it is that we work ever more closely together to make our people safer and more prosperous.

I'd like to start by addressing the troubling situation in Gaza and the West Bank, which President Erdogan and I have discussed today.

The loss of life we have seen is tragic and extremely concerning.

Such violence is destructive to peace efforts and we call on all sides to show restraint.

There is an urgent need to establish the facts of what happened yesterday through an independent and transparent investigation, including why such a volume of live fire was used and what role Hamas played in events.

Palestinians have the right to protest, but these protests must be peaceful. We are concerned that extremist elements are seeking to hijack legitimate protests to further their own objectives.

And while we do not question the right of Israel to defend its borders, the use of live fire and the resulting loss of life is deeply troubling. We urge Israel to show restraint.

It is in everyone's interests for peace and stability to prevail in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

The discussions we have had today have covered the breadth and depth of our relationship.

Allow me to say a few words on each of the key topics we've discussed.

Firstly, we are NATO allies and remain firmly committed to the Alliance as the best way of guaranteeing our collective security.

Since my visit to Ankara in January last year, both Turkey and the UK have suffered grievous attacks by terrorists.

As Daesh is defeated militarily, we are aware of the risk of foreign fighters dispersing from Syria and Iraq.

To counter this we have today agreed to take concrete steps towards measures that will formalise our information sharing.

Our intent is to agree that when Turkish authorities return a British Citizen suspected of terrorist offences to Britain, they will do so with

vital evidence such as media taken from mobile devices and transcripts of interviews.

This will support our efforts to secure the convictions of those who seek to do us harm.

We have also reaffirmed our commitment to deepen co-operation between the Home Office and the Turkish Ministry of the Interior.

This commitment means that we will look at how our police, border, customs and coastguard agencies can share information more easily in order to tackle the terrorists and organised criminals involved in money laundering, drug smuggling and people and arms trafficking.

Turkey is on the frontline of many vital issues for the UK, particularly in Syria where it is an important member of the Global Coalition Against Daesh.

Today President Erdogan and I have reaffirmed our commitment to defeating Daesh and the need for a political settlement to end the war and provide stability for all of Syria, Turkey and the wider region.

We also agreed on the need to ensure humanitarian access in Syria and on the importance of compliance with International Humanitarian Law and the protection of civilians by all sides.

We reiterated our condemnation of the terrible chemical weapons attacks in Douma and on the streets of Salisbury.

While clearly the two incidents differ in order of magnitude, they are part of a pattern of disregard for the global norms that prohibit the use of chemical weapons.

Today President Erdogan and I agreed on the importance of restoring the international norm that the use of chemical weapons is abhorrent and can never be acceptable.

I underlined once again the UK position that the Salisbury attack was not just an act of attempted murder in Salisbury – nor just an act against the UK by Russia.

It was an affront to the rules based system on which we all depend.

The conflict in Syria has led to the displacement of millions of people, both within Syria and beyond.

I pay tribute to Turkey's extraordinary generosity in hosting more than three and a half million Syrian refugees and educating more than 600,000 Syrian children.

We recognise the enormous effort that the Turkish authorities are making to give those refugees the help they need.

In total the UK has committed more than £750 million both bilaterally and through the EU budget to the Facility for Refugees in Turkey, in order to support those efforts.

During this visit the UK and Turkey have agreed high-level talks between our countries to explore ways in which we can work together to build capacity in the region and reduce the flow of migrants.

The importance of the UK-Turkey partnership is also demonstrated by our growing trade relationship.

Trade between the UK and Turkey has increased by more than 50 per cent over the past decade and is now worth more than £15 billion.

We continue to build on this and look to our future trade relationship once the UK leaves the EU.

During my visit to Ankara in 2017, we agreed to establish a trade working group to explore ways to liberalise and increase trade between the UK and Turkey.

Our officials continue to work together to build a solid foundation on which our relationship can flourish.

During my visit to Turkey, BAE Systems and TAI also agreed to collaborate on the pre-design phase of Turkey's new TFX fighter jet, which resulted in a contract worth more than £100 million being signed in August 2017.

This was the start of a deep and enduring defence partnership, including a new and unique government-to-government agreement that set a new framework for co-operation and dialogue, including between our defence ministries and air forces.

And today we can discuss the next phase of this project, Rolls Royce's bid to co-design the engine for the TFX fighter jet. This would support the development of aerospace engineering capability and jobs in the UK and Turkey and we look forward to continuing discussions.

Finally, the UK stood with the Turkish people when its democracy came under attack in July 2016.

It is right that those who sought to overthrow the democratically elected government are brought to justice.

But it is also important that in the defence of democracy – which has been facing extraordinary pressures from the failed coup, instability across the border from Syria and from Kurdish terrorism - Turkey does not lose sight of the values it is seeking to defend.

That is why today I have underlined to President Erdogan that we want to see democratic values and international human rights obligations upheld.

Throughout this process and in the face of the shared challenges ahead, the UK will remain a true friend to Turkey.

So President Erdogan once again thank you for your visit and for such productive talks.

4. PQs

[Syria: Kurds](#)

23 May 2018 | 144397

Asked by: Rosie Duffield

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions the Prime Minister has had with the Turkish President on that country's involvement in the humanitarian crisis in Kurdish Northern Syria.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The UK is committed to supporting efforts to address the humanitarian crisis in Syria. In our engagement with Turkey at all levels, we regularly highlight the need for protection of civilians, freedom of movement for those caught up in violence, and the urgent need for full and unhindered humanitarian access. We are clear that displaced individuals must be allowed to return home peacefully if they wish to do so. The Prime Minister discussed these issues with President Erdogan during his recent visit to the UK.

[Turkey: Kurds and Yazidis in Syria](#)

23 May 2018 | 791 cc1028-1030

Asked by Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of allegations of genocide by Turkey against the Kurds and Yezides of Afrin province in Syria, made by 13 organisations, including the Kurdish Red Crescent; and what action they will take.

Answered by: Baroness Goldie

My Lords, we have followed the situation in Afrin closely. We are aware of the displacement of large numbers of civilians and of reports of civilian casualties in Afrin. It is vital that those civilians who have been displaced from Afrin are able to return safely and voluntarily. We continue to make this point strongly in our close dialogue with Turkey about Syria, and Turkey has assured us of its commitment to respect international law in its operations.

Asked by Lord Hylton

My Lords, I am glad to hear about dialogue on return, but is it not the case that more than 100,000 locals have been driven out of Afrin? Kurds and Yazidis are being murdered while Turks from Turkey, Syrian refugees from Turkey and displaced Syrian Islamists from elsewhere are being settled there. Is that not strong evidence of genocide and of conduct unworthy of a NATO ally, partly executed by ex-members of Isis and al-Nusra and paid for by Turkey? Will the Government use all their influence to stop this?

Answered by: Baroness Goldie

The UK has called for de-escalation and the protection of civilians while recognising Turkey's legitimate interest in the security of its borders. In

relation to allegations of genocide, it has always been the position of the UK that that should be determined by the judicial authorities. I should make it clear that the UK has seen no credible evidence of genocide, but, on the general point made by the noble Lord, the UK has a close engagement with Turkey and that manifested itself most recently in exchanges between the Prime Minister and President Erdoğan when he visited this country between 13 and 15 May.

Asked by: Lord Lea of Crondall

My Lords, I shall pick up the last point about the recent visit by the President of Turkey. Knowing the obvious paranoia in Ankara about the aspirations to some sort of Kurdish statehood, which is not going to happen in south-east Turkey, and about what is happening in Syria and in Iraq, did the Government raise this with President Erdoğan? What sort of approach does the Minister think the international community, particularly in Europe, can take in relation to the deteriorating situation in Ankara?

Answered by: Baroness Goldie

As I said earlier, it was an important development and an illustration of the strong relationship which the United Kingdom has with Turkey that at the recent visit the Prime Minister, as I indicated, raised a number of issues and in particular had a wide-ranging discussion with President Erdoğan on foreign policy issues, such as the Israeli-Palestinian situation, Iran, Turkey's role in Syria and the importance of NATO unity to counter aggressive Russian action.

Asked by: Lord Wallace of Saltaire

My Lords, does the Minister accept that the presence in London in particular of a very large number of British-Turkish citizens of Kurdish origin gives us a particular interest in what happens in northern Syria and south-eastern Turkey, that the role that Kurdish forces have played in the defeat of ISIS on the Syria/Iraq border strengthens that interest and that, if there is to be any long-term solution to the Syrian conflict, it has to include a degree of autonomy for Kurds in northern Syria and probably also for Kurds in south-eastern Turkey? Are we making arguments like that to the Turkish Government?

Answered by: Baroness Goldie

As the noble Lord will be aware, the United Kingdom supported the United Nations Security Council resolution which called for a ceasefire across Syria, the only exception being continued operations against Daesh, al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups as designated by the Security Council. The noble Lord will also be aware that the United Nations-led Geneva process, which is the principal peace process mandated by the UNSCR, remains the forum for a lasting political settlement. We expect all parties to be able to participate in that forum.

Asked by: Lord Selkirk of Douglas

Can the Minister say what the nature is of the relationship between the British Government and the Turkish Government, bearing in mind that Turkey is a key strategic player in the region?

Answered by: Baroness Goldie

I thank my noble friend for that observation. It is indeed the case that Turkey is a key ally of the United Kingdom and a vital strategic and trade partner. I remind your Lordships that, in the very recent airstrike to degrade the use and capability of chemical weapons in Syria, Turkey was very supportive and was a helpful ally.

Asked by: Lord Collins of Highbury

My Lords, in the discussions with the Turkish Government, has the Minister raised the announcement by the Deputy Prime Minister who said that the city will not be handed back but that a council will be established which will remain until stability is restored? What is the assessment of that period? Will we see Turkey occupying Afrin for a considerable time into the future?

Answered by: Baroness Goldie

The noble Lord will be aware that, in Afrin, governance is administered by a Turkish-backed local Syrian council that was elected on 12 April. Indeed, the UK has urged Turkey to ensure that, under that administration, civilians are protected and the humanitarian needs of the population are considered. As I said earlier to the noble Lord, Lord Hylton, it is vital that those who have been displaced from Afrin are able to return safely and voluntarily.

Asked by: Lord Elystan-Morgan

Fifty years ago, Parliament passed the Genocide Act. Unnatural modesty forbids me from mentioning the name of the person who piloted it through the House of Commons. How seriously do we take our obligations under that statute? Do we regard it as part of living law from day to day?

Answered by: Baroness Goldie

We take all obligations in respect of alleged breaches of international law very seriously, and we have always regarded the United Nations as an important forum for addressing these issues. The United Kingdom believes that allegations of genocide are for international judicial authorities to determine. As the noble Lord is probably aware, the International Criminal Court does not have territorial jurisdiction over crimes committed in Syria, because Syria is not a state party to the Rome statute.

[Syria: Military Intervention](#)

22 May 2018 | HL7616

Asked by: Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what action they plan to take following the reports on 28 April of 58 abductions from Afrin province, including 28 Yezidis, by Turkish forces and allied militias.

Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Reports of human rights violations by Turkish affiliate forces in Afrin are concerning, but must be substantiated. We have not seen credible evidence which verifies this report. We have been consistent in calling

for de-escalation, the protection of all civilians, and freedom of movement for those caught up in the violence, in accordance with international humanitarian law. All those displaced by the violence must be allowed to return home peacefully if they wish to do so.

[Topical Questions](#)

17 May 2018 | 641 c413

Asked by: Karen Lee

In 2017, Britain sold £216 million worth of military contracts and supplies to Israel and £571 million worth to Turkey. The disproportionate use of deadly force by those nations against Palestinian and Kurdish citizens has been rightly condemned. Does the Minister agree that the UK needs a transparent and human rights-oriented arms trade to ensure that this country does not enable brutal attacks to be made on civilians?

Answered by: Graham Stuart | International Trade

All export licence applications are rigorously assessed, case by case, against the consolidated EU and national arms export licensing criteria. No licence will be granted if there is a clear risk that the equipment might be used for internal repression, or in a serious violation of international humanitarian law. However, we continue to monitor the situation in Israel and Gaza closely.

[Turkey: Foreign Relations](#)

15 May 2018 | 142355

Asked by: Ann Clwyd

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what matters the Government plans to raise with the Turkish President, Tayyip Erdogan, on his visit to the UK in May 2018.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The visit is an opportunity for the UK and Turkey to discuss our close co-operation on counter-terrorism, migration, regional stability, trade and to raise other issues, including human rights.

[Topical Questions](#)

15 May 2018 | 641 c133

Asked by: Joan Ryan

President Erdoğan of Turkey, who is currently visiting this country, has called snap elections for 24 June. Those elections will be held under a state of emergency, severely curtailing the freedoms of expression, assembly and association and the right to take part in public affairs. They will also introduce an executive presidency with wide-ranging powers that many see as an attack on democracy. What is the Government's view?

Answered by: Boris Johnson | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

I can tell the right hon. Lady that we had a conference with our Turkish friends only the other day and that, although the relationship between the UK and Turkey is very strong, as she knows, we took every opportunity to raise our concerns about human rights and the repression of the media.

Turkey: Press Freedom

14 May 2018 | HL7381

Asked by: Lord Birt

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Turkey about the jailing of 12 journalists from the newspaper Cumhuriyet.

Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We are seriously concerned by the sentences imposed on journalists and staff from Cumhuriyet newspaper in Turkey and I raised the case of the jailed staff with my Turkish counterpart when we met in late April.

Turkey: Elections

08 May 2018 | 140007

Asked by: Emily Thornberry

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential implications of the Turkish Government's decision to hold parliamentary and presidential elections under a state of emergency for the prospects of such elections being held in a free, fair and transparent manner; and what recent representations he has made to his counterpart in Turkey on that issue.

Answering member: Boris Johnson | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We have frequently raised with the Turkish Government our desire to see the State of Emergency lifted as soon as possible. We are aware of the concerns expressed by the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly and others about holding elections under a State of Emergency. We will continue to urge the Turkish Government to conduct elections in a manner that respects the rule of law and protects fundamental freedoms in line with its international commitments.

Turkey: Christianity

08 May 2018 | 139993

Asked by: Gregory Campbell

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what recent discussions he has had with his counterpart in the Turkish Government on the treatment of Christians in that country.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

British ministers have regular discussions with their Turkish counterparts on a range of human rights issues, including freedom of religion and belief. We take the situation of minority groups in Turkey very seriously and urge the Turkish Government to safeguard their rights.

Turkey: Administration of Justice

02 May 2018 | 137962

Asked by: Nigel Dodds

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his counterpart in the Turkish Government on ensuring fair trials for people accused of having links with terrorist organisations in that country.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

The Foreign Secretary and I have regular discussions on human rights issues with our Turkish counterparts. The arrest of Amnesty International staff in Turkey is a case in point. It is important that legal measures, particularly under the State of Emergency in Turkey, be proportionate, justified and in line with Turkey's democratic principles and its international human rights obligations.

Turkey: Prisoners

01 May 2018 | HL6964

Asked by: Lord Balfe

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they intend to make representations to the government of Turkey regarding the continued detention of (1) Seyran Demir, a young female prisoner with leukaemia, and (2) Sise Bingol, a seriously ill 78 year old woman imprisoned for "willingly helping a terrorist organisation".

Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We are aware of the cases of Seyran Demir and Sise Bingol. We regularly engage with the Government of Turkey over the human rights situation in the country. We consistently urge Turkey to uphold the rights of all its citizens, including those in detention, in line with its domestic responsibilities and international obligations. We will continue to engage with Turkey on these important issues.

Kosovo: Rendition

01 May 2018 | 137428

Asked by: John Grogan

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what representations has he made to the Government of Kosovo on the rendition of six Turkish citizens from that country to Turkey; and if she will make a statement.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Our Embassy in Pristina has raised with the Government of Kosovo the arrest and deportation of six Turkish nationals from Kosovo to Turkey. We have made clear to the Government of Kosovo that as a supporter of democratic values, Kosovo must prioritise the Rule of Law and international human rights standards in all its institutions.

[Lezgin Botan](#)

30 Apr 2018 | HL6910

Asked by: Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what is their assessment of the 18-year prison sentence imposed on the Turkish opposition MP Mr Lezgin Botan; and what response, if any, they intend to make.

Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We expect Turkey to undertake any legal processes against MPs fairly, transparently and with full respect for the rule of law. We regularly encourage Turkey to respect its human rights obligations, including the right to freedom of expression. The Foreign Secretary and the Minister of State for Europe and the Americas consistently raise these issues with their Turkish counterparts and will continue to do so.

[Syria: Military Intervention](#)

24 Apr 2018 | HL6883

Asked by: Baroness Cox

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Turkey about the laying of a roadside bomb in Manbij, Syria, reportedly by allies of Turkey, which killed a British soldier on 29 March.

Answering member: Earl Howe | Ministry of Defence

The Government will not provide any additional information on the circumstances surrounding the death of Sgt Tonroe.

[Syria: Armed Conflict](#)

27 Mar 2018 | 133558

Asked by: Hilary Benn

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, whether any British-supplied weapons have been used in the Turkish military operations in Afrin.

Answering member: Sir Alan Duncan | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

UK arms exports are subject to export controls. All decisions to approve export licences are considered on a case-by-case basis against the Consolidated EU and National Arms Export Licensing Criteria (Consolidated Criteria). Decisions are based on the most up-to-date

information and analysis available, including reports from our overseas network and military contacts. The Consolidated Criteria provide a thorough risk assessment framework and require us to consider the impact of providing equipment and its capabilities. We do not issue export licences where, for example, we assess there is a clear risk that the goods might be used for internal repression or used aggressively against another country. We cannot categorically state that UK weapons are not in use in Turkish military operations in Afrin, but all decisions to approve export licenses will have been taken based on the Consolidated Criteria and according to the latest information available at that time. We keep our approach to all countries under continual review.

Topical Questions

27 Mar 2018 | 638 c647

Asked by: Bambos Charalambous

Turkey's actions in Cyprus's exclusive economic zone do not create the right climate for reunification negotiations to recommence. Will the Minister join me in condemning Turkey's actions and call on it to withdraw its warships from Cyprus's exclusive economic zone, where they have been since 9 February?

Answered by: Sir Alan Duncan | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We fully recognise the rights within the economic zone, which the hon. Gentleman mentioned, and fully support the right to drill for oil.

Turkey: Human Rights

19 Mar 2018 | HL6022

Asked by: Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they intend to discuss with the government of Turkey the high rate of arrests in Turkey for reasons reported to be connected with the 2016 attempted coup, together with detentions in Turkey of foreign citizens and attempts to have other foreigners extradited from Europe.

Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We have made clear to the Turkish government that legal measures under the State of Emergency following the failed coup in 2016 should be proportionate, justified and in line with its democratic principles and its international human rights obligations. We regularly engage with Turkish ministers over human rights issues and will continue to do so. Whenever the Turkish authorities wish to make an extradition request supported by sufficient prima facie evidence of a criminal act recognised in English law and in compliance with the provisions of the Extradition Act 2003, such a request will be considered.

[Arrest Warrants: Turkey](#)

12 Mar 2018 | HL5952

Asked by: Lord Hylton | Party: Crossbench

To ask Her Majesty's Government whether they have received evidence showing that Turkey has used Interpol or Europol notices to harass politically active Turks and non-Turks who have no connection to crimes or terrorism.

Answering member: Baroness Williams of Trafford | Home Office

Interpol has an independent review body, the Commission for the Control of Files, which seeks to ensure that the processing of personal information by Interpol is in compliance with the Interpol's regulations. This minimises scope for abuse of Interpol procedures, and we are not aware of successful abuse of Interpol procedures that are outside of the organisation's framework by any member country.

Whilst Turkey has a strategic cooperation agreement with Europol, the agreement does not authorise the transmission of data related to an identified individual or identifiable individuals. Turkey therefore does not have access to any personal data held by Europol.

[Salih Muslim](#)

12 Mar 2018 | HL5899

Asked by: Lord Alton of Liverpool

To ask Her Majesty's Government what assessment they have made of the use of a European Arrest Warrant by Turkey to arrest Salih Muslim.

Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We understand from reporting from Prague, where Mr Muslim was arrested on 24 February, that the arrest was made under a "red notice" submitted to the Czech authorities via Interpol by the Turkish government, rather than through a European Arrest Warrant. We note that Mr Muslim was released without charge on 27 February and is free to carry on his travels.

[Turkey: Human Rights](#)

05 Mar 2018 | HL5743

Asked by: Lord Patten

To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon on 6 February (HL5033), whether the shared interests that the UK has with Turkey also include (1) respect for human rights, (2) the independence of the judiciary, and (3) prisons free from torture.

Answering member: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign and Commonwealth Office

We have regular discussions at ministerial level with Turkish counterparts on human rights and rule of law issues. We have also raised concerns about reports of ill-treatment in detention. We will

continue to encourage Turkey to respect its human rights obligations, including the right to freedom of expression, and to support the rule of law for all its citizens.

5. Other Parliamentary material

5.1 Debates

[Turkey: Human Rights and the Political Situation](#)

09 Mar 2017 | 622 cc402-423WH

[UK-Turkey Relations](#)

04 July 2012 | 547 cc978-1019

5.2 Statements

[Protection of Civilians in Afrin](#)

12 March 2018 | 637 cc668-680

5.3 Early Day Motions

[VISIT OF TURKISH PRESIDENT RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN TO THE UK](#)

EDM 1252 (session 2017-19)

10 May 2018

Ann Clwyd

That this House is very concerned about the visit of the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to the UK, in light of general elections now being held in Turkey whilst a state of emergency continues to be in place; notes in connection to this that the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights recently stated that it is difficult to imagine how credible elections can be held in an environment where dissenting views and challenges to the ruling party are penalised so severely and that elections held in an environment where democratic freedoms and the rule of law are compromised would raise questions about their legitimacy; encourages the Government of Turkey to restore the constitutional order, respect fundamental freedoms, ensure international election monitors observe the elections and allow all politicians standing for election to campaign freely and receive comparable mainstream media coverage; and calls on the Government to raise these issues as a matter of urgency with the Turkish President during his visit.

[CURRENT SITUATION IN AFRIN, SYRIA](#)

EDM 879 (session 2017-19)

30 January 2018

Christopher Stephens

That this House is deeply concerned about the current situation of the people of Afrin, who have been subjected to Turkish Government aggression; notes that Afrin has been one of the more stable parts of Syria and that it has become a destination for hundreds of refugees

from many cities including Aleppo; further notes that its current population has risen from 400,000 before the war to roughly 750,000; believes that the true victims of Turkey's invasion of northern Syria are refugees, babies, women and children; further notes that Afrin borders Turkey on the north and is surrounded on its other sides by Syrian government forces and rebel forces including Al Qaeda; recognises that Afrin like other parts of Rojava is run democratically and peacefully with an emphasis on religious and ethnic pluralism, restorative justice, and the liberation of women and economic cooperatives; further recognises that YPG, YPJ and SDF forces, backed by the US, have been the most successful groups in defeating Daesh in Syria; is further concerned that the Turkish government's recent actions are widely judged to have worsened the prospects for peace in Syria and wider Middle East; condemns the use of violence by Turkey's Army on the people of Afrin and the Kurdish forces in Syria; and calls on the Government, as a matter of urgency to press the importance of respect for fundamental human rights and rule of International law.

TURKEY'S WAR ON AFRIN

EDM 877 (session 2017-19)

30 January 2018

Chris Williamson

That this House strongly condemns Turkey's unprovoked, aggressive airstrikes on Afrin, a Kurdish canton in Northern Syria, resulting in deaths and injuries of civilians; notes that initiating a military attack on a country that has not attacked you constitutes a war crime; understands that neither Afrin canton, nor any other Northern Syrian Kurdish region, has ever attacked or threatened to attack Turkey; further notes that Turkish jets started targeting civilian areas in Afrin on 20 January 2018, including Afrin city, Cindirêsê, Reco, Shera, Shêrawa and Mabeta districts and the refugee camp Rubar; notes that the Rubar camp hosts more than 20,000 refugees who have fled war-torn parts of Syria, and that Afrin itself hosts more than 200,000 internally displaced people which constitutes over half its population; condemns the Turkish military's alliance with al-Qaeda, Heyet Tahrir El Sam, in coordinated aerial and ground attacks on Afrin, opening up a new and bloody front after seven years of tragic conflict in Syria; believes this can only drag the region into a renewed catastrophe, inflicting hunger, killing more children, creating more displaced people; commends the Kurdish forces in the YPG and YPJ who defeated ISIS in their capital of Raqqa; calls on all democratic forces and public opinion to show solidarity with the people of Afrin, to protest and condemn Turkey's genocidal invasion; condemns the silence of the international community in the face of these attacks which will legitimise the violation of human and fundamental rights.

PERSECUTION OF KURDISH MPS**EDM 761 (session 2017-19)****10 January 2018****Grahame M Morris**

That this House expresses grave concern over the sentencing of elected Kurdish MP Idris Baluken on 4 January 2018 to 16 years and eight months in jail; notes that Mr Baluken has been an elected parliamentarian in Turkey since 2011, and has played an active role as a mediator in peace process negotiations between the Turkish state and the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK); further expresses concern that on 5 January 2018 former MP Sebahat Tuncel was sentenced to two years and three months in prison for speaking at a Kurdish New Year event; further notes that Tuncel, a women's rights advocate and former nurse, was targeted for her advocacy for Kurdish rights and senior position in the Peoples' Democratic Party; expresses concern over the sentencing to prison of four other HDP officials and MPs Aysel Tugluk, Leyla Birlik, Nursel Aydoglan and Adem Geveri; condemns the political nature of these arrests and trials which took place in the context of a state of emergency, along with the simultaneous arrest of almost 100 HDP elected politicians and thousands of activists (EDM 602); condemns this attempt to eliminate Kurdish MPs from the Turkish parliament, denying millions of their democratic voice; expresses concern that the judiciary seems to be guided in these matters by the Turkish Government; notes that this judicial process has been described by Idris Baluken as political genocide; calls for the immediate release of HDP politicians from prison; and further calls for the Government to urge Turkey to stop its politically-motivated repression of the HDP.

OSMAN KAVALA**EDM 757 (session 2017-19)****9 January 2018****John Mann**

That this House expresses concern regarding the detention of Osman Kavala, a world-known Turkish philanthropist and a civil society activist who studied at the University of Manchester; recognises the work Osman Kavala has done to promote an open and democratic Turkey; notes that thousands of political prisoners have been arrested in Turkey; and calls on the Government to work with the Turkish Embassy in the UK and the Turkish Prime Minister to ensure the immediate release of Osman Kavala.

ARREST AND TRIALS OF KURDISH HDP LEADERS IN TURKEY**EDM 602 (session 2017-19)****28 November 2017****Grahame M Morris**

That this House expresses concern regarding the upcoming trials of the democratically-elected leaders of Turkey's third biggest parliamentary party, the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP); notes that a total of nine elected MPs, 88 elected mayors and over 8,000 party activists are currently in prison; further notes that the basis for the arrests are

speeches delivered which, along with the mass arrest of journalists (EDM 231), encroaches on the right to free speech in Turkey; believes that the motivations behind their arrest and imprisonment on terrorism charges, months after the removal of parliamentary immunity, are political; recognises that the arrest of HDP parliamentarians is also an attack on the democratic rights of the six million plus citizens of Turkey who voted for them; commends the work being done by the HDP in attempting democratic steps towards a peaceful resolution to the Kurdish question; condemns the Turkish Government for trying to criminalise the democratic voice of millions of its citizens; calls for the immediate release of the HDP politicians; and calls on the UK Government to pressure Turkey to lift the state of emergency and restore democracy.

HUMAN RIGHTS IN TURKEY

EDM 546 (session 2017-19)

15 November 2017

David Lammy

That this House is extremely concerned about the ongoing crackdown on civil society and essential freedoms, specifically on human rights defenders, in Turkey, including the recent arrests of Amnesty International Turkey Chair, Taner Kilic, and Amnesty International Turkey Director, Idil Eser, along with nine other human rights defenders, also known as the Istanbul 10; fears that these arrests are politically motivated actions aimed at silencing the work of some of Turkey's most prominent human rights defenders given that the indictment fails to provide evidence to substantiate the charges it contains; notes that the 11 activists are accused of membership of a variety of armed terrorist organisations which carries a jail term of up to 15 years; further notes that these arrests are occurring within a context of a crackdown on human rights by the Turkish Government since the failed coup attempt in July 2016, which has seen thousands of detentions, arrests, the dismissal of journalists and shutting down of media outlets; and calls for the immediate and unconditional release of Taner Kilic from pre-trial detention as well all charges to be dropped against Idil Eser, Taner Kilic and all human rights defenders imprisoned in Turkey in connection with their work.

ISTANBUL 10

EDM 234 (session 2017-19)

20 July 2017

Chris Law

That this House notes with grave concern the arrest of 10 human rights defenders at a workshop in Istanbul, including Idil Eser, Amnesty International's Turkey Director, ostensibly for committing crimes in the name of a terrorist organisation without being a member; notes that holding these individuals in pre-trial custody despite an utter lack of credible evidence seems to represent a complete collapse of human rights in Turkey; calls on the Government to do all it can to guarantee the safety of those in custody, as well as call for their immediate and unconditional release, and to put pressure on Turkey to stop the

targeting of human rights campaigners; and furthermore hopes that increased pressure after the UK leaves the EU for trade deals with non-EU countries will not lead to compromise in protection of worldwide human rights.

PRESS FREEDOM IN TURKEY

EDM 231 (session 2017-19)

20 July 2017

Tom Brake

That this House expresses concern regarding the upcoming trial of the 19 journalists from the newspaper Cumhuriyet in Turkey, which starts on 24 July 2017; calls for the release of these journalists and all other journalists and human rights defenders imprisoned in Turkey in connection with their work; believes that this trial represents a crackdown on freedom of speech in Turkey by the Turkish Government which has seriously accelerated under the state of emergency over the last year; further calls on the Government to ensure that in all discussions with its Turkish counterparts the protection of freedom of speech, freedom of expression and independence of the press is raised; is disappointed that Turkey was ranked 155th out of 180 countries in Reporters Without Borders' 2017 World Press Freedom Index; and condemns the prolonged arbitrary detention without reason and the isolation of detainees by the Turkish Government, which represents a violation of international law.

SITUATION IN TURKEY

EDM 123 (session 2017-19)

4 July 2017

Ann Clwyd

That this House continues to be extremely concerned about the on-going crackdown on media workers, lawyers, public servants, parliamentarians and non-violent political activists in Turkey; notes that many parliamentarians, including Enis Berberoglu, Figen Yuksekdag and Selahattin Demirtas and over 150 media professionals, including Ahmet Altan, Ahmet Sik and Musa Kart, are being prosecuted on spurious charges; further notes that, since the coup attempt in July 2016, authorities in Turkey have reportedly arrested 50,000 people, sacked or suspended 150,000, and shut down over 100 media outlets; hopes that those on the March for Justice from Ankara to Istanbul, led by the leader of the CHP opposition party, are able to conclude their peaceful protest without incident; fears that the attempted coup is being used as yet another pretext to muzzle dissent and purge opponents and that Turkey's long-term stability is being undermined; categorically condemns the use of violence, including attempts to subvert democratically-elected governments by force; and calls on the Government to press the importance of respect for fundamental human rights and rule of law, as well as to raise specific concerns and cases, with counterparts in Turkey, including at the highest levels, as a matter of urgency.

6. Further reading

[Turkey: "For journalists, Turkey has become a dungeon"](#), Amnesty International, 3 May 2018

[Human Rights in Turkey](#), Amnesty International UK, 6 July 2017

[Journalism is not a crime: Crackdown on media freedom in Turkey](#), Amnesty International, May 2017

[Human rights and the political situation in Turkey](#), Commons Debate Pack 2017-0077, 6 March 2017

[World Report 2018: Our annual review of human rights around the globe \(Turkey\)](#), Human Rights Watch, 2017

[Turkey](#), Human Rights Watch (Webpages)

[Turkey](#), Open Doors (Webpage)

[Turkey](#), Reporters without Borders (Webpage)

[All-Party Parliamentary Group for Turkey](#)

[All-Party Parliamentary Group for Alevis](#)

[All-Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief](#)

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