

Debate Pack

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Kurdish political representation and equality in Turkey

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Background

A Westminster Hall debate on Kurdish political representation and equality in Turkey has been scheduled for Tuesday 2 November 2021, from 9.30-11:00am. The debate has been initiated by Lloyd Russell-Moyle MP.

Kurdish Political representation

Kurds in Turkey are diverse in terms of political affiliation, language and cultural and religious identity. Of current political parties in Turkey that are perceived as predominantly Kurdish, the largest is the People's Democratic Party (HDP) and its affiliate the Democratic Regions Party (DBP), which competes only in local elections. The HDP is often described as "left wing", and the HDP and DBP are widely seen as influenced to some degree by the anti-capitalist ideology of Abdullah Öcalan, the founder of the principal Kurdish armed insurgent group in Turkey, the PKK.

The HDP espouses liberal policies on equalities, and [according to BBC Monitoring](#), describes its party programme as for "labour, equality, freedom, peace and justice", on its official Turkish language website.

However, Kurds in Turkey hold diverse political views, and do not only support political parties said to represent Kurdish interests. Large numbers of Kurds support the ruling Justice & Development Party (AKP). The [Guardian reported in December 2020](#) that a recent Metropoll survey found that 29% of Kurds would vote for the AKP, compared with 32% for HDP. Kurdish politicians have served in the Cabinets of AKP Governments.

Parties representing Kurdish interests have often been accused by the Turkish state of having links to and standing as proxies for armed insurgent groups such as the PKK. This has led to many of them being banned, which the [Balkans Insight news site describes as](#) "the routine fate of Kurdish parties in Turkey" and "until now, 23 Kurdish parties have been closed on various allegations, such as terrorism and ethnic separatism".

For example, the HDP's predecessor, the Democratic Society Party, DTP, was closed in 2009 by order of Turkey's Constitutional Court. It ruled that the DTP had become "the focal point of activities against the indivisible unity of the state, the country and the nation".

The HDP now also faces the threat of legal closure. In June 2021, the Constitutional Court [accepted an indictment](#) by Bekir Şahin, the chief prosecutor of the Supreme Court of Appeals, which called for the closure of the HDP and also demands that 451 party members be banned from politics.

The Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) and violence

The Kurdish Workers' Party, or PKK, has fought a long war with the Turkish state for independence or autonomy of the Kurdish region of Turkey. The leader of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, launched the guerrilla campaign in 1984, but was captured in Kenya in 1999 and imprisoned in Turkey. Shortly afterwards he announced from prison an end to the armed campaign against the Turkish Government.

Subsequently, the PKK introduced a five-year unilateral ceasefire and took a number of steps to try to change its image, calling on the Government to involve it in the country's political process, allow more cultural rights for Kurds and release imprisoned PKK members including Öcalan. But these demands were not met to the PKK's satisfaction and the ceasefire ended in 2004. During the ceasefire most PKK operatives moved to the Kandil Mountains in the autonomous Kurdish region of Iraq.

The PKK is proscribed as a terrorist organisation by the [UK](#), the [European Union](#), and the [United States](#).

In 2005, the Kurdish DTP, called on the PKK to restore its ceasefire, without success. In December 2009 the DTP was outlawed, leading most of its Members of Parliament to transfer to another Kurdish party, the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP).

In 2007, Turkey carried out airstrikes against PKK bases in northern Iraq but attacks continued. The Turkish Government and the PKK continued to pursue a political settlement in the following few years but without dramatic progress. Another Kurdish group, the DTK, or Democratic Society Congress, started a campaign of civil disobedience.

After its [victory at the 2011 election](#) the ruling AKP of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, far from addressing Kurdish claims, increased his nationalist rhetoric, in line with its generally more authoritarian and conservative Islamist tone. A two-and-a-half-year ceasefire [collapsed in July 2015](#), with the PKK resuming its insurgency. There have been no significant peace talks since then, and the conflict entered a new more violent phase, with [almost 3,000 lives lost between July 2015 and July 2017](#).

Kurdish independence or autonomy?

The Foreign Office [submitted evidence](#) to a 2018 Foreign Affairs Select Committee inquiry on '[Kurdish aspirations and the interests of the UK](#)', that included observations on how views on Kurdish independence have developed:

[...] While the PKK's original objective was to achieve Kurdish independence from Turkey, since the 1990s this objective has changed. Öcalan now claims to advocate 'democratic autonomy' for Kurds, with a focus on equal cultural and political rights within the Turkish state rather

than secession. The HDP / BDP have supported the “democratic autonomy” vision, with a particular declared focus on respect for minority rights.

Crackdown on the HDP 2015-16

BBC Monitoring also submitted [evidence](#) to the inquiry, in which it stated that both the HDP and BDP quickly became popular in Turkey’s Kurdish-majority southeast before peace talks collapsed between the Kurdish PKK and the Turkish state, after which heavy armed clashes followed in the Kurdish cities for several months in 2015 and 2016.

According to BBC Monitoring, the government at the time accused local HDP politicians of collaborating with the PKK during the clashes, and that since then the “HDP and the BDP have since suffered from the effects of government measures taken on the basis of “anti-terrorism” legislation”. During this period HDP co-leaders, Selahattin Demirtas and Figen Yuksekdag, were imprisoned along with other party officials and thousands of HDP and DBP activists.

The Turkish embassy in London [submitted evidence to the enquiry also](#), stating:

The main issue at hand is the threat posed by the PKK terrorism. In Turkey, Kurdish-originated citizens enjoy the same rights and privileges as any other citizen with a different background. Kurds in Turkey are an integral part of society, and significantly contribute to the prosperity and diversity of the Turkish society. They can freely speak their language and enjoy Kurdish TV and radio broadcasts, both private and state-owned. However, the PKK not only poses a threat for the Turkish people, but also constitutes a malign force with its delusional worldview for the Kurdish people that it claims to represent. For decades, it caused an unimaginable human cost and suffering in Turkey.

The [US State Department’s 2020 Human Rights Report on Turkey](#) states that “nearly all private Kurdish-language newspapers, television channels, and radio stations remained closed on national security grounds under government decrees”. Human Rights Watch, in its [2020 report on Turkey](#) states that “the Erdoğan government refuses to distinguish between the PKK and the democratically elected Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP)”.

HDP national political representation and electoral success

In the 2014 Presidential elections, won by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan with around 52% of the vote, the HDP candidate, Selahattin Demirtas, took about 9% of the vote.

In the 2015 Parliamentary elections, the HDP managed to clear the high threshold required of parties to enter the Turkish Grand National Assembly (its unicameral parliament) – 10% of the vote. The HDP gained 80 seats, the first time it had won seats in a national election (in the 2011 elections it fielded independent candidates). It took part in the snap elections held in November of the same year and won 59 seats out of the 550.

Presidential and Parliamentary elections took place in June 2018, these elections were the first to be held under Turkey's [new constitutional arrangements](#), that turned Turkey's Parliamentary system into a Presidential one.

The elections took place under a state of emergency that was originally imposed in July 2016 after a military coup was launched against President Erdoğan.

While polls indicated Mr Erdoğan might struggle to achieve the more than 50% of the vote required for a first-round victory, the President gained a majority of votes - 52.5%. Selahattin Demirtas, the HDP Presidential candidate, gained 8.4% of the vote, despite having been imprisoned by the state since November 2016.

Independent election observers from [the OSCE](#) the [Council of Europe](#) stated that the state of emergency did not allow a level playing field for opposition candidates. Opposition candidates [complained](#) of media blackouts of their campaigns, and questioned the integrity of the state body – the RTUK which is supposed enforce Turkey's strict laws on fair media coverage during elections.

It wasn't clear if the Kurdish HDP (People's Democratic Party) would clear the 10% threshold, but despite curbs on their activities they performed relatively well, winning 11.7% of the vote, giving them 67 seats out of a total of 600.

Detention of Selahattin Demirtas and European Court of Human Rights rulings

Turkey, as a member of the [Council of Europe](#) and having ratified the European Convention of Human Rights, is subject to rulings from the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR).

In November 2018 the ECtHR heard the case of Selahattin Demirtas, former co-chairman of the Kurdish HDP party, who was imprisoned two years previously on "terrorism-related" charges, which he denied, after his immunity as member of parliament was removed. Mr Demirtas has still not faced trial.

The ECHR [found](#) that that multiple extensions of the pre-trial detention of the former leader had "served a political agenda". The court ruled that decisions to keep Mr Demirtas behind bars during two "crucial" elections had "pursued

the predominant ulterior purpose of stifling pluralism and limiting freedom of political debate”. The ECtHR demanded that Turkey “take all necessary measures to put an end to [Mr Demirtas’s] pre-trial detention”.

Some two-weeks later a [Turkish court rejected an appeal to release Mr Demirtas](#), despite the ECtHR ruling. The ECtHR then referred the case to its Grand Chamber.

In June 2020, the Constitutional Court, the highest court in Turkey, [issued a judgment](#) finding unanimously that the period of time Mr Demirtaş had been in pre-trial detention violated the Turkish Constitution. Prosecutors responded by launching a new investigation into the politician and requested his arrest once again before he could be freed.

In December 2020, the Grand Chamber of the ECtHR ruled Turkey must immediately release Mr Demirtas, [saying his pre-trial detention since November 2016](#) had sent “a dangerous message to the entire population” that sharply narrowed free democratic debate.

This ruling has also been ignored and Selahattin Demirtas remains behind bars.

Arrest of other HDP MPs

The [Inter-Parliamentary Union](#), the global organization of national parliaments, looked at the detention of Turkish politicians, particularly those from the HDP in a [2021 briefing](#). It stated that since 2018, over 30 parliamentarians have been sentenced to terms of imprisonment, and that since 4 November 2016, “scores of parliamentarians have been detained and others have gone into exile”. Thirteen parliamentarians are currently in prison, including the former HDP co-chairs, Mr. Selahattin Demirtaş and Ms. Figen Yüksekdağ.

Thirteen HDP members of parliament have lost their parliamentary mandates in recent years, largely due to the fact that their prison sentences became final, most recently in the cases of Ms. Leyla Güven and Mr. Musa Farisoğulları in June 2020. Some of those detained should have been protected by Parliamentary immunity after they were elected in the 2018 Parliamentary elections, but the criminal cases against them were reportedly not suspended, “with the justification that they were prosecuted with terrorism-related charges”.

The IPU also presented evidence that had been supplied to them by the Turkish Government, that explained the actions they had taken against HDP politicians.

The Turkish authorities justified the legality of the measures taken against the HDP parliamentarians, invoking “the independence of the judiciary, the need to respond to security and terrorism threats, and legislation adopted under the state of emergency”.

The authorities asserted to the IPU that:

There is no “HDP witch-hunt” in Turkey; that women parliamentarians are not being specifically targeted; that there is no Kurdish issue in Turkey and no current conflict in south-eastern Turkey; that Turkey is facing a terrorism issue at multiple levels involving the PKK and its “extensions”; that the HDP has never publicly denounced the violent activities of the PKK; that HDP members, including members of parliament, have made many statements in support of the PKK and their “extensions”; that HDP members have attended funerals of PKK suicide bombers and called for people to take to the streets, which has resulted in violent incidents with civilian casualties; that this does not fall within the acceptable limits of freedom of expression; that the Constitutional Court has reached such conclusions in several cases and, in other cases, domestic remedies have not yet been exhausted; and that the independence of the judiciary and the rule of law in Turkey must be respected.

Removal of local mayors and members of municipal assemblies

In February 2017, the United Nation’s Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) published [a report looking at the effect of the government’s security operations in Turkey’s South-East region](#) between July 2015 to December 2016. The OHCHR state that in September 2016, using emergency powers adopted after the attempted coup, the Government adopted a decree permitting it to appoint “trustees” in lieu of elected mayors, deputy mayors or members of municipal councils suspended on charges of terrorism.

The report says that by the end of December 2016, reportedly 69 municipal co-chairs of the pro-Kurdish Democratic Regions Party (DBP) had been arrested, 58 had been dismissed and most had been replaced with “trustees”, in 50 municipalities or around 50 per cent of all municipalities held by DBP.

The removal of HDP Mayors continues. According to Human Rights Watch’s [Events of 2020 report on Turkey](#) since August 2019, the Interior Ministry has justified the removal of 48 elected Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) mayors on the basis that they face criminal investigations and prosecutions for links with the PKK, they were all replaced with “trustees”. The report said that at time, 19 mayors remained in pretrial detention.

A February 2020 [HRW investigation](#), looked at 18 case studies of HDP Mayors who had been detained. The report states that the courts rely on three main kinds of “evidence” as grounds for pretrial detention: “vague testimony by

witnesses; the mayors' attendance at political meetings, rallies, demonstrations, and funerals of militants; and their social media postings, in some cases from several years earlier”.

In most cases, HRW report, the identity of the witnesses is protected. Witnesses “allege that the mayors are associated with certain activist organizations that operated without hindrance for years but that the authorities now regard as PKK-linked”; or they “assert in a generalized and vague way that that the mayors undertook unspecified activities for the armed group”.

HRW state that in many cases, the courts simply accept that the prosecutor's evidence meets the criteria for pretrial detention of reasonable suspicion of “membership of a terrorist organization.” This is a “catalogue offense” in Turkey's Criminal Procedure Code, which means courts are automatically permitted to rule that suspects under investigation for this crime can be held in pretrial detention.

Mayors are not the only local politicians targeted. According to the [European Commission 2020 Turkey country report](#), the government further removed 68 HDP members of municipal assemblies in 2019, 15 of which were arrested. In metropolitan municipalities alone, 214 elected municipal assembly members were suspended. Some 1,870 HDP members were arrested and 206 imprisoned in 2019 alone.

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Press and media articles

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

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[Turkey's Kurdish obsession explains Putin's gains and US strains](#)

Brookings Institution

Ömer Taşpınar

13 October 2021

[Erdogan says latest Kurdish YPG attack on Turkish police is 'final straw'](#)

Reuters

11 October 2021

[MHP objects to debate on Kurdish issue](#)

Hürriyet Daily News

5 October 2021

[Pro-Kurdish HDP becomes latest party calling for return to parliamentary system](#)

Ahval News

27 September 2021

[Top court gives another 30 days to HDP for defense](#)

Hürriyet Daily News

2 September 2021

[Continued Kurdish Oppression in Turkey](#)

Borgen Magazine

Maddie Youngblood

6 August 2021

[Hate crimes against Kurds rise in Turkey](#)

Jerusalem Post

Seth J. Frantzman

31 July 2021

[PACE Turkey monitors welcome the release of opposition MP Ömer Faruk Gergerlioğlu](#)

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

7 July 2021

[Kurdish activists remain resilient despite Erdogan's crackdown](#)

Financial Times
Ayla Jean Yackley
12 May 2021

[Turkey details Human Rights Action Plan in Official Gazette](#)

Hürriyet Daily News
30 April 2021

[EU 'deeply concerned' over crackdown on pro-Kurdish party, Turkey rebuffs criticism](#)

Euractiv
19 March 2021

[Erdogan is seeking to crush Turkey's number three political party. Here's why](#)

The Independent
Borzou Daragahi
18 March 2021

[Turkey: Free Politician after European Court Ruling](#)

Human Rights Watch
4 March 2021

[Erdoğan promises reforms in 2021, but human rights and press freedom are tough nuts to crack](#)

Euronews
Michael Daventry
1 January 2021

[Turkey: the rise and fall of the Kurdish party that threatened Erdoğan](#)

The Guardian
Bethan McKernan
27 December 2020

[The bloody consequences of Turkey's clashes with the Kurds](#)

Index on Censorship
Baris Altintas
18 November 2020

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PQs

Turkey: Kurds

9 Sep 2021 | 40585

Asked by: John McDonnell

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will make representations to his counterpart in the Turkish Government to help prevent the further escalation of Turkish alleged persecution and inciting of violence against Kurdish people in the Kurdish regions of Turkey, Iraq and Syria.

Answered by: Wendy Morton | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The UK continues to follow closely the situations in northern Iraq and Syria. We reiterate the importance of dialogue and cooperation between Iraq and Turkey to combat terrorism, ensure regional security and protect civilians. The UK respects Iraqi sovereignty and acknowledges Turkey's security concerns regarding the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK), a proscribed terrorist group. We believe Turkey has a legitimate right to defend itself against the PKK, whose attacks we condemn as we condemn all terrorism. In Turkey, we continue to urge an end to PKK violence and a return to a peace process. As in any conflict, civilian casualties should be avoided and human rights fully protected. In Syria, we welcome the fact that the ceasefires in north-east and north-west Syria broadly continue to hold, and we continue to call on all sides in the Syrian conflict to abide by their obligations under international law.

Turkey: Kurds

9 Sep 2021 | 40584

Asked by: John McDonnell

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of recent reports that the Turkish Government is seeking to shut down the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party in Turkey; and if he will make a statement.

Answered by: Wendy Morton | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We have made it clear to Turkey that we expect the government to undertake any legal processes or actions against opposition parties, as well as human rights defenders and journalists, fairly, transparently and with full respect for the rule of law. We are aware that the Turkish Government is seeking to ban the People's Democratic Party (HDP). Our Embassy meets regularly with the HDP leadership, as it does with other opposition parties, to discuss their concerns, including the arrests of HDP MPs. We will continue to engage

closely with Turkey, including at Ministerial level, to insist that it fulfils its international legal obligations to secure the human rights of all people, regardless of their legitimate political affiliations, particularly in the areas of freedom of expression and assembly, press freedom and the treatment of detainees. We will hold Turkey to account using established international mechanisms, and look for opportunities to raise these issues with our international partners.

Turkey: Kurds

9 Sep 2021 | 40581

Asked by: John McDonnell

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the implications for his policies of reports of the attack and murder of a Kurdish family on 30 July 2021 in the Konya region of Turkey; and if he will make a statement.

Answered by: Wendy Morton | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The murder in July of seven members of the Dedeoğulları family was shocking and deeply saddening. I understand that there were several arrests in the days following the murders, and that police investigations are continuing. We also note claims in the Turkish media that the attack was racially motivated. We expect the Turkish authorities to conduct a rigorous investigation into the killings.

Turkey: Politics and Government

27 Jul 2021 | 36565

Asked by: Andrew Rosindell

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, what assessment he has made of the extent to which democratic freedoms have been curtailed in Turkey since the 2016 coup d'état attempt.

Answering member: Wendy Morton | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We are aware that certain measures adopted under a state of emergency following the attempted coup in 2016 have since been enshrined in law. These include pre-trial detention, freedom of expression and restrictions on civil society. It is important that the long-term response to the 2016 coup attempt is lawful, measured and democratic. The right to freedom of expression should be protected and Turkey's international obligations upheld. I raised human rights with my Turkish counterpart during my visit to Turkey in June.

Turkey: Kurds

20 Mar 2020 | 29849

Asked by: Andrew Rosindell

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, what discussions he has had with his Turkish counterpart on the recent arrest of Kurdish human rights lawyers.

Answered by: Wendy Morton | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

We are concerned by reports of the arrests of Kurdish human rights lawyers. Ministers and our Ambassador to Turkey regularly emphasise to the Turkish Government the need to respect human rights, and to support the rule of law. We will continue to engage the Turkish Government on these issues and be clear in our expectation that Turkey live up to its human rights obligations, which is essential to the long-term health of Turkish democracy.

We shall continue to monitor the situation closely and maintain our support for legitimate and democratic Kurdish groups in Turkey.

Turkey: Kurds

9 Sep 2019 | HL17646

Asked by: Lord Hylton

To ask Her Majesty's Government what representations they have made to the government of Turkey about the dismissal of elected mayors and other officials in Kurdish majority areas of Turkey and the accusations of malpractice by their replacements.

Answered by: Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon | Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office

The decision to appoint state trustees in local municipalities is a decision for the Turkish Government. Nevertheless, we expect Turkey to undertake any legal processes against locally elected representatives fairly, transparently and with full respect for the rule of law. We note the suspension of the mayors of Mardin, Van and Diyarbakir on 19 August. We are following these ongoing legal developments closely. Our Ambassador raised this with the Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister on 22 August.

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Debates

Arrest of Opposition Politicians: Turkey

16 Mar 2021 | Westminster Hall | 691 cc109-16WH

Motion that this House has considered arrest of opposition politicians in Turkey. Agreed to on question.

Turkey: Treatment of Kurds

10 Apr 2019 | Westminster Hall | 658 cc108-15WH

Motion that this House has considered the treatment of Kurds in Turkey. Agreed to on question.

Turkey

7 Jun 2018 | House of Commons | 642 cc529-57

Motion that this House has considered early elections, human rights and the political situation in Turkey. Agreed to on question.

Turkey: Human Rights and the Political Situation

9 Mar 2017 | Westminster Hall debate | 622 cc403-24WH

Motion that this House has considered human rights and the political situation in Turkey. Agreed to on question.

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Early Day Motions

Suppression of democratic opposition in Turkey

EDM 512 (session 2012-22)

18 October 2021

Lloyd Russell-Moyle

That this House calls on Turkey to end its attacks on democracy and democratically elected politicians, trade unions, human rights advocates, journalists, academics, and lawyers; notes the intensifying suppression and criminalisation of democratic opposition in Turkey by the AKP Government under President Erdogan; further notes that opposition MPs, particularly HDP representatives, trade unionists, and advocates for democracy are being imprisoned through dismantling the rule of law, removal of parliamentary protections and active intervention in the judicial decisions, the attacks on women's rights and the violence used against women protestors; notes that former co-leader HDP Selahattin Demirtaş and activist Osman Kavala remain in prison despite lack of evidence and successfully appealing the prosecution's allegations; and further notes that the significant dismantling of democratic processes, freedom of speech and fundamental human rights must cease immediately.

Trial of HDP Leaders in Turkey

EDM 1779 (session 2019-21)

27 April 2021

Alyn Smith

That this House regrets the erosion of democracy which has taken place under President Erdogan in recent years amid the arrests of elected politicians and party activists; notes its concern at recent reports that lawyers defending HDP politicians against charges which include attacking the integrity of the state have been denied access to the courtroom on arbitrary and unlawful grounds; further notes that the European Court of Human Rights has ruled that the pre-trial detention of Selahattin Demirtaş and other Turkish citizens is unlawful and calls for their immediate release; recognises that the arrest of HDP parliamentarians is also an attack on the democratic rights of more than six million citizens of Turkey who voted for those parliamentarians; commends the work being done by the HDP in attempting democratic steps towards a peaceful resolution to the Kurdish question; and calls for the immediate release of those arrested and for the restoration of full democratic and civil rights for all people in Turkey.

Opposition and democracy in Turkey

EDM 1698 (session 2019-21)

25 March 2021

Chris Stephens

That this House is deeply concerned by the legal process underway in Turkey to shut down the second largest opposition party in Turkey, the People's Democratic Party (HDP); notes the case filed by Chief Public Prosecutor Bekir Sahin in the Constitutional Court, which claims that the HDP aimed to disrupt the unity and territorial integrity of the State; understands that the attacks on the HDP are 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 11 democratically elected former HDP members of Parliament; calls for the release of the thousands of people imprisoned simply for membership of the peaceful, political HDP; is further deeply concerned by the withdrawal, in the same week of Turkey, from the Istanbul Convention, which seeks to protect women from gender-based violence; and calls on the Government to make representations to the Turkish authorities to halt the continuing assault on democracy, the criminalisation of democratic opposition and the assault on human rights, and to press for a genuine rules-based international community and for human rights compliance amongst UK trading partners.

Omer Faruk Gergerlioglu – HDP MP Turkey

EDM 1663 (session 2019-21)

18 March 2021

Chris Stephens

This house is deeply concerned that Turkish HDP MP Omer Faruk Gergerlioglu has been stripped of his parliamentary immunity and sentenced to two years six months in prison on terror charges; notes that Gergerlioglu's indictment relates to a social media post in 2016 in which he called for a peaceful solution to the Kurdish question; notes that Human Rights Watch has released a written statement condemning his conviction; calls on the Foreign Secretary to raise the question of this conviction with his Turkish counterpart; and calls on the Turkish Government for an immediate review and reversal of this conviction.

Democratic process and attacks on Kurds in Turkey

EDM 1014 (session 2021-22)

14 Oct 2020

Chris Stephens

That this House notes that the Turkish authorities have issued arrest warrants for 82 members of the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP), including current and former democratically elected mayors, and the party's current Central Executive Board; further notes that the HDP is the third largest political party in Turkey; notes that in 2019 the HDP won 65 municipalities in local elections and that the Turkish State has arbitrarily taken control of 51 of those municipalities; is deeply concerned that at least 200 democratically elected HDP representatives including 7 MPs are imprisoned; believes that this mass incarceration amounts to a violation of fundamental rights including the rights to political association, political participation and freedom of expression; is further deeply concerned that this undermines the rights of the Turkish people to have their democratic will upheld; and calls on the Foreign Secretary to express these concerns to his Turkish counterpart as a matter of utmost urgency.

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