



# General Assembly

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**Racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, follow-up and implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action**

### **Written statement\* submitted by Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié entre les peuples, a non-governmental organization on the roster**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[6 February 2022]

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\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only. The views expressed in the present document do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials.



## **Turkey: discriminatory and racist practices against the Kurdish people**

### **POLITICAL CONTEXT**

In the latest opinion polls, it appears that the government led by Mr Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) will lose a significant number of votes and even the majority in the 2023 elections.

Prior to each election period, physical attacks on opposition groups, especially the Kurds, increase due to discriminatory and racist language, insults and populist rhetoric from members of the Turkish government and its partner, the Nationalist Action Party (MHP).

In times of crisis, when it loses votes before elections and sees an increase in criticism, the Turkish government uses the nationalist sentiments of racist sections to target Kurds, Armenians and Alevis. This behaviour serves to distract the public's attention from the growing economic and social problems that are leading to the weakening of support for Erdogan's government. Thus, inside the country the targeting of opposition groups has intensified, while military attacks against the Kurds in northern Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic have begun to multiply.

When the government began to realise that it had lost votes ahead of the 7 June 2015 elections, it targeted the People's Democratic Party (HDP), comprising a significant part of the opposition. As a result, on 5 June 2015, during a rally organised by the HDP, 5 civilians were killed and more than 400 civilians were injured when a bomb was detonated by one of Daesh's members. During the same period, bombs were placed in HDP buildings in Adana and Mersin on 17 May 2015. On 20 July 2015, 34 youths were injured in a suicide attack on youths from different opposition groups who had gone to Suruc to declare that they were with the people of Kobane against the Islamic State attacks.

On 10 October 2015, there was a suicide attack by members of Daesh in Ankara which resulted in the death of 104 people and 391 injured. Opposition groups had wanted to organise a rally to protest against the government with the slogan "Work, Peace and Democracy".

On 21 March 2017, Kemal Kurkut, a student at Malatya University, was killed by police while on his way to the Newroz celebration in Diyarbakir. According to the police statement, Kemal Kurkut was shot because he ran away when he was asked to bring his bag up. Publicly available footage of the event shows that Kemal Kurkut was not carrying a bag and was half naked when he was shot by the police. Despite this, the police officer involved was released and no penalty was imposed.

Prior to the general elections on 18 June 2018, the government's discriminatory and targeted approaches towards the opposition were seen in the attack carried out in the Suruç district of Urfa on 14 June 2018 by AKP MP İbrahim Halil Yildiz and his relatives against the Senyasarlar family, known as opponents.

As a result of these events, three people from the Senyasarlar family and one person from the Yildiz family were killed. The court sentenced Fadil Senyasarlar to 37 years and 9 months in prison. However, AKP deputy Halil İbrahim Yildiz is still a deputy. In order to protest against this decision, the Senyasarlar family demonstrated in front of the courthouse, with the slogan "we seek justice". The family members were detained and threatened to give up their search.

Since the AKP government came to power, it has used Islam and nationalism as a weapon against opposition groups. Seeing that its power is weakening, the regime appeals to the nationalistic feelings of the people and manipulates them towards anti-democratic practices. Once again, discrimination against the HDP is creating tensions in society. The Turkish government tries to criminalise different ethnic and opposition groups living in Turkey through its relations with known mafia people. The Turkish government policy towards the Kurdish people is conducive to a climate of injustice and insecurity for the HDP's members, while ensuring impunity for the crimes committed against them.

One of them is Sedat Peker, known as a member of the nationalist mafia. Due to his conflicts with the Turkish government over the last two years, he left Turkey and lives in Dubai. Recently he confessed in his statements on social networks the link between the Turkish state and Al-Nosra since the 1990s regarding the Kurdish cause.

In one of the statements he made on 31 May 2021, he said that the government will start again to divert attention by provoking chaos as it did on 12 March 1995 with provocative actions towards Alevi places of worship such as the sweeping of the Cemevi, in the Istanbul Gazi district.

After announcing the state of emergency to the public following the July 15 coup, the government decided to end it on 18 July 2018. However, on 25 July 2018, due to the "state of terrorist emergency", this period was extended until 31 July 2021 with amendments to Law No. 7145 and public law decrees.

This and other laws were updated in parliament on 18 July 2021 allowing the state of emergency to be legalised until 2024. With this strategy, on the one hand, the government aims to increase the pressure on opponents by legal means, and on the other hand, it uses nationalism by creating chaos in society.

As a result of the government's persecution of the HDP, on 17 June 2021, a person named Onur Gencer easily entered the HDP building in Izmir Konak, which was under 24-hour police surveillance, with his gun. The assailant was able to open fire on the HDP premises and murder Deniz Poyraz, a young woman who was alone in the building. Onur Gencer had visited Turkmen camps in the Syrian Arab Republic and was trained by the military advisory association called SADAT, known for its closeness to the Turkish government. In the current trial, Onur Gencer is taking a provocative stance against his victim's family, while no thorough investigation has been carried out to establish whether there were accomplices and to verify the origin of the funds paid into Onur Gencer's bank account.

Instead of condemning the assassination, Devlet Bahçeli (MHP chairman), in his statement of 22 June 2021 accused the victim of being in charge of the rural section of the Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK). Although he attacked the victim with his statement, no action was taken against him by the Turkish judiciary.

The HDP building in Marmaris suffered a gun attack on 15 July 2021, and no casualties were recorded. Instead of investigating the facts, the government and its partners are leading the judiciary to file a closure case against the HDP.

On 28 December 2021, an armed attack was carried out on the HDP building in Bahçelievler district and two party members were injured.

It was reported that the attacker, Muhammed Eren Sütçü, then spilled tea on Ramazan Dishari, who was offering them tea, and attacked him with a knife. Party member Aziz Şimşek, who tried to stop the attacker, was also slightly injured. The attacker was arrested and brought before the 3rd Istanbul Criminal Peace Court, which decided on 3 January 2022 to release him and place him under house arrest. Following intense protests, he was imprisoned on 10 January 2022.

## **ATTACKS ON CIVILIANS**

The platform "We Will Stop Femicide" stated that between 2010 and 2020, 2'296 women were murdered in Turkey.

On 20 July 2021, an armed attack was carried out against Kurdish families in Ankara Altındag. On 21 July, a person named Hakim Dal was killed following a 60-person racist attack on the Kurt family, who reside in Carikliyköy, in the Meram district of Konya. The same group attacked a family on 12 July and seriously injured 7 members including four women, saying "We are nationalists, we will not let you live here".

As a result of these attacks, 7 people were taken into custody but only 2 of them were arrested. Faced with the lack of rigour of the state, a second armed attack was carried out against the same family on 30 July 2021: 7 people, including 3 women, were killed (Yasar Dedeoglu,

Baris Dedeoglu, Serpil Dedeoglu, Serap Dedeoglu, Ipek Dedeoglu, Metin Dedeoglu and Sibel Dedeoglu) simply because of their identity.

Since Turkey's withdrew from the Istanbul Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, there has been an increase in violence and murders against women.

Turkey presents itself as a state based on the rule of law. According to Article 19 of the Turkish Constitution, "everyone shall enjoy personal freedom and security" and according to Article 25 "everyone shall have freedom of thought and opinion".

Hate speech, incitement to racism on the basis of ethnic origin for political interests, the attempt to pit people against each other, violate the rights enshrined in the Turkish Constitution and all fundamental rights enshrined in international instruments.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

MRAP calls upon the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism to pay particular attention to racist speeches and acts perpetrated by groups close to or linked to the ruling Justice and Development Party in Turkey.

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