

COUNTRY FACT SHEET

TURKEY

August 2007

Research Directorate
Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada

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1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Official name

Republic of Turkey

Geography

Turkey is located in southeastern Europe and southwestern Asia and has a total area of 780,580 km². Neighbouring countries are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Iran, Iraq and Syria. Turkey borders the Black Sea, the Aegean Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. The climate is temperate with hot, dry summers and mild, wet winters.

Population and density

Population: 71,158,647 (July 2007 estimate).

Density: 94.7 persons per km² (mid-2005 estimate).

Principal cities and populations (2005 estimate)

Istanbul 9,770,000; Ankara (capital) 3,587,000; Izmir 2,498,000; Bursa 1,411,000; Adana 1,247,000.

Languages

Turkish is the official language. Other languages are Kurdish, Dimli (also known as Zaza), Azeri, Kabardian and Gagauz. Between 1982 and 1991, a law was in effect prohibiting the use of Kurdish.

Religions

Islam is practised by approximately 99.8% of the population (mostly Sunni). The remaining 0.2% is mostly Christian and Jewish.

Ethnic groups

Turkish (80%) and Kurdish (20%) (estimated).

Demographics (2007 estimate unless otherwise indicated)

Population growth rate: 1.04%.

Infant mortality rate: 38.33 deaths/1,000 live births.

Life expectancy at birth: 72.88 years.

Fertility rate: 1.89 children born/woman.

Literacy rate (% aged 15 and older who can read and write): 94.3% of males, 78.7% of females (2003).

Currency

Turkish New Lira (TNL).

TNL 0.84 = CAD 1.00.¹

National holidays

2006: 1 January (New Year's Day), 10 - 13 January (Kurban Bayram - Feast of the Sacrifice), 23 April (National Sovereignty and Children's Day), 19 May (Commemoration of Ataturk, and Youth and Sports Day), 30 August (Victory Day), 23 - 25 October (Seker Bayram - End of Ramadan), 29 October (Republic Day), 31 December - 3 January 2007 (Kurban Bayram - Feast of the Sacrifice).

2007: 1 January (New Year's Day), 23 April (National Sovereignty and Children's Day), 19 May (Commemoration of Ataturk, and Youth and Sports Day), 30 August (Victory Day), 13 - 15 October (Seker Bayram - End of Ramadan), 29 October (Republic Day), 20 - 23 December (Kurban Bayram - Feast of the Sacrifice).ⁱ

Head of state

President Ahmet Necdet Sezer (since 16 May 2000).

President Sezer's term officially expired on 16 May 2007.

Head of government

Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan (since 14 March 2003).

Form of government

Turkey is a republican parliamentary democracy. The Grand National Assembly elects the president to serve a 7-year term. The president, who may serve no more than one term, chooses a prime minister from among the members of parliament. The Grand National Assembly (Turkiye Buyuk Millet Meclisi) is Turkey's legislative branch of government.

Legislative structure

The federal legislature is unicameral. The Grand National Assembly has 550 members elected by the general population for 5-year terms.

Administrative divisions

Turkey has 81 provinces:

Adana, Adiyaman, Afyonkarahisar, Agri, Aksaray, Amasya, Ankara, Antalya, Ardahan, Artvin, Aydin, Balikesir, Bartin, Batman, Bayburt, Bilecik, Bingol, Bitlis, Bolu, Burdur, Bursa, Canakkale, Cankiri, Corum, Denizli, Diyarbakir, Duzce, Edirne, Elazig, Erzincan, Erzurum, Eskisehir, Gaziantep, Giresun, Gumushane, Hakkari, Hatay, Icel (Mersin), Igdır, Isparta, Istanbul, Izmir (Smyrna), Kahramanmaras, Karabuk, Karaman, Kars, Kastamonu, Kayseri, Kilis, Kirikkale, Kirklareli, Kirsehir, Kocaeli, Konya, Kutahya, Malatya, Manisa, Mardin, Mugla, Mus, Nevsehir, Nigde, Ordu, Osmaniye, Rize, Sakarya, Samsun, Sanliurfa, Siirt, Sinop, Sirnak, Sivas, Tekirdag, Tokat, Trabzon (Trebizond), Tunceli, Usak, Van, Yalova, Yozgat and Zonguldak.

Judicial system

The judiciary comprises the Constitutional Court, the High Court of Appeals (Yargitay), the Council of State (Danistay), the Court of Accounts (Sayistay), the Military High Court of Appeals and the Military High Administrative Court.

ⁱ Some dates may vary by one or two days due to the Islamic lunar calendar.

Elections

To elect the Grand National Assembly's 550 members, Turkey has universal suffrage for citizens 18 years and older. Political parties with more than 10% of the popular vote receive at least one seat. The last election was 22 July 2007 with the following results:

The Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi, AKP) won 340 seats with 46.7% of the vote and the Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP) won 112 seats with 20.8% of the vote. The Nationalist Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, MHP) won 71 seats with 14.3% of the vote. Independent politicians, some of whom are pro-Kurdish, secured 27 seats.

Defence

Military service is compulsory. The age of eligibility is 20. In August 2005, the armed forces of Turkey numbered 514,850 personnel including the following:

Army:	402,000
Navy:	52,750
Air Force:	60,100

The gendarmerie consisted of 150,000 personnel and the coast guard 3,250. Reserve armed forces numbered 378,700 and reserve gendarmerie totalled 50,000.

USD 9.81 billion was allocated for the 2005 defence budget.

Media

Media censorship was in effect in Turkey from 1979 until the early to mid 1990s. In 1997, journalists in prison were granted amnesty by the Turkish government. Current laws stipulate that journalists can be arrested for reporting on news items that the government labels as sensitive.

The following are Turkish newspapers with wide circulation: *Posta*, *Hurriyet*, *Sabah*, *Zaman*, *Fanatik*, *Takvim*, *Pas Fotomac*, *Milliyet*, *Vatan*, *Turkiye* and *Aksam*.

In 2003, there were roughly 26.7 million television receivers and 3.5 million personal computers in Turkey. In 2005, there were approximately 16 million Internet users.

United Nations Human Development Index (HDI) and Country Rankⁱⁱ

Value: 0.757 (2004).

Rank: 92 out of 177 countries (2004).

Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and Country Rankⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱⁱ The HDI is a composite measurement of human development in a country, based on life expectancy, levels of literacy and education, and standard of living. Values are: 0.800 and higher (high human development), 0.500-0.799 (medium human development) and 0.500 and under (low development index). Countries are ranked in descending order by their HDI value.

Value: 0.745 (2004).

Rank: 71 out of 136 countries (2004).

Population below the national poverty line

20% (2002).

Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI)^{iv}

Score: 3.8/10 (2006).

Rank: 60 out of 163 countries surveyed (2006).

Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer (GCB)^v

Political parties 3.9, parliament/legislature 4.0, business/private sector 4.1, police 4.0, media 3.9, education system 4.1, military 3.9, utilities 4.0, registry and permit services 4.1, NGOs 4.0 and religious bodies 4.0.

[Information compiled from: BBC 23 July 2007; Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers 2004; EurActiv.com 26 July 2007; Europa 2006, 4360-4395; PHW 2007 Oct. 2006, 1254-1264; TI 7 Dec. 2006; ibid. 7 Nov. 2006; UN 2006; US 17 Apr. 2007]

2. POLITICAL BACKGROUND

Membership in the European Union (EU):

In 1999, as part of its bid to join the European Union (EU), Turkey instituted various reforms including constitutional amendments to expand civil and human rights² and changes to its policies on women's rights and Kurdish culture.³ The *International Herald Tribune* states that "[t]he very prospect of Turkey's EU membership has been nothing less than an anchor of economic and political reform."⁴ Although falling short of full diplomatic recognition, Turkey's acknowledgment of Cyprus as an EU member was a catalyst for membership negotiations, which began in earnest in October 2005.⁵ The negotiations are forecasted to take roughly ten years.⁶

In 2006, Human Rights Watch (HRW) expressed concern that the Turkish government was not following through on its intent of instituting significant human rights reforms.⁷ European officials have also noted with concern that discord between Islam and secular forces in Turkey is increasing.⁸

Secularism, Islam and Parliamentary Elections

Secularism is an important feature of the modern Turkish state.⁹ In the 1990s and continuing to the present, the extent to which Islam influences the political arena has been a key question.¹⁰ According to *Political Handbook of the World 2007 (PHW 2007)*, there

ⁱⁱⁱ The GDI adjusts the rating of the HDI to reflect inequalities between men and women.

^{iv} The Transparency International CPI is based on composite survey data from 16 polls and 10 independent institutions. The data reflect the perceptions of resident and non-resident business people and country analysts. Scores range from 0 (highly corrupt) to 10 (highly clean). According to their score, countries are ranked in order from least corrupt (1) to most corrupt (163).

^v The Transparency International GCB is a public opinion survey used to gauge people's perceptions of corruption within their own state. Scores range from 1 (not corrupt) to 5 (extremely corrupt).

has been tension over whether political nominations, such as that of the central bank governor in March 2006, were made based on religious considerations.¹¹ Within Turkey and its military establishment in particular, concern exists over whether Prime Minister Erdogan aspires to infuse Islamic principles into government.¹²

The presidential term of Ahmet Necdet Sezer officially ended on 16 May 2007.¹³ A vote to elect a new president, boycotted by the opposition, took place in Turkey's parliament on 27 April 2007.¹⁴ The Justice and Development Party's (Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi, AKP) candidate, Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul, was just a few votes shy of securing the presidency.¹⁵ The chief opposition party, the Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP), submitted an appeal to Turkey's Constitutional Court to have the vote annulled, since a minimum number of parliamentarians were not present at the 27 April 2007 vote.¹⁶ The court's members ruled 9 to 2 in favour of cancelling the presidential vote.¹⁷ Following the court ruling, on 2 May 2007, Prime Minister Erdogan made an appeal for an early parliamentary election as opposed to waiting until 4 November 2007, the scheduled election date.¹⁸ The parliamentary election occurred on 22 July 2007, resulting in a victory of 340 out of 550 seats for Erdogan's AKP.¹⁹ Following the victory, Erdogan stated that he would abide by the secular nature of Turkey's constitution and strive for national unity.²⁰

Turkey and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan, PKK):

East and southeastern Turkey was, in the 1980s and 1990s, the site of a civil war between the Turkish military and the separatist PKK.²¹ Roughly 30,000 people were killed in the civil war.²² In 2004, the PKK ended a five-year ceasefire²³ leading to an escalation of violence between the PKK and Turkish forces.²⁴ Some PKK forces are known to conduct operations against Turkish forces from northern Iraq.²⁵ The Turkish government has called for the arrest of PKK members by the Iraqi forces.²⁶

3. POLITICAL PARTIES

Leading party:

Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi, AKP): The "democratic conservative" AKP was established in 2001.²⁷ AKP leader, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, was initially unable to stand for office because he had been imprisoned in 1998 for a poem he recited²⁸ that was said to have "incited hatred on religious grounds."²⁹ After the AKP secured 363 out of 550 seats in the November 2002 legislative election, the Turkish legislature approved changes to the constitution, which enabled Erdogan to run for office and secure a seat.³⁰ In July 2005, the AKP had 357 seats in the legislature.³¹ In July 2007, the AKP won 340 out of 550 parliamentary seats.³² *Political Handbook of the World 2007 (PHW 2007)* describes the AKP as a "moderate religious, center-right formation."³³

Opposition parties:

Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP): Founded by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1923, the CHP is traditionally secular and nationalist and supports economic intervention.³⁴ The CHP governed Turkey from 1923 until 1950.³⁵ Between

1981 and 1992, the CHP was dissolved.³⁶ In the November 2002 legislative election, the CHP secured 178 out of 550 seats.³⁷ In July 2007, the CHP won 112 parliamentary seats.³⁸

Nationalist Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, MHP): With roots dating back to 1948, the MHP is described by the *Political Handbook of the World 2007 (PHW 2007)* as ultra-nationalist.³⁹ The MHP has also been known as the Republican Peasant Nation Party (Cumhuriyetçi Köylü Millat Partisi, CKMP), the Conservative Party (Muhafazakar Parti, MP) and the Nationalist Labour Party (Milliyetçi Çalışma Partisi, MCP).⁴⁰ In July 2007, the MHP won 71 seats in the parliamentary election.⁴¹ Devlet Bahçeli is the leader of the MHP.⁴²

Other parties:⁴³

Changing Turkey Party (Degişen Türkiye Partisi, DEPAR, Avrupa), Communist Party of Turkey (Türkiye Komünist Partisi, TKP), Democracy and Peace Party (Demokrasi ve Barış Partisi, DBP, Avrupa), Democratic Left Party (Demokratik Sol Parti, DSP), Democratic People's Party (Demokratik Halk Partisi, DEHAP, Political Parties), Democratic Society Party (Demokratik Toplum Partisi, DTP), Democratic Turkey Party (Demokrat Türkiye Partisi, DTP, Avrupa), Equality Party (Eşitlik Partisi), Felicity Party (Saadet Partisi, SP), Free Society Party (Özgür Toplum Partisi, ÖTP, Avrupa), Great Unity Party (Büyük Birlik Partisi, BP), Justice Party (Adalet Partisi, AP), Labour Party (Emek Partisi, EMEP, Avrupa), Liberal Democrat Party (Liberal Demokrat Parti, LDP), Motherland Party (Anavatan Partisi, ANAP), My Turkey Party (Türkiyem Partisi), New Party (Yeni Parti, YP, Avrupa), New Turkey Party (Yeni Türkiye Partisi YTP, Avrupa), Party for Independent Republic (Bağımsız Cumhuriyet Partisi), Party for Independent Turkey (Bağımsız Türkiye Partisi, BTP), Party of Land (Yurt Partisi), Party of Liberty and Change (Hürriyet ve Değişim Partisi, HURPARTİ), Party of Liberty and Solidarity (Özgürlük ve Dayanışma Partisi, ÖDP), Party of Luminous Turkey (Aydınlık Türkiye Partisi, ATP), Party of Nation (Millet Partisi, MP), Party of Rights and Liberties (Hak ve Özgürlükler Partisi, HAK-PAR), Party of the People's Rise (Halkın Yükselişi Partisi, HYP), Rebirth Party (Yeniden Doğuş Partisi, YDP, Avrupa), Republican Democracy Party (Cumhuriyetçi Demokrasi Partisi, CDP), Revolutionary Socialist Workers' Party (Devrimci Sosyalist İşçi Partisi, DSİP), Socialist Democracy Party (Sosyalist Demokrasi Partisi, SDP), Social Democrat Party (Sosyal Demokrat Parti), Social-Democrat People's Party (Sosyaldemokrat Halk Partisi, SHP), True Path Party (Doğru Yol Partisi, DYP), Turkish Party (Türkiye Partisi, TP, Avrupa), Turkish Socialist Workers' Party (Türkiye Sosyalist İşçi Partisi, TSİP), Workers' Party (İşçi Partisi, İP), Working People's Party (Emekçi Halk Partisi, EHP, Avrupa), Young Party (Genç Parti, GP).

4. ARMED GROUPS AND OTHER NON-STATE ACTORS

Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan, PKK): The PKK was established in 1978 and began its quest for an independent Kurdistan in 1984.⁴⁴ The PKK has also been known as the Congress for Freedom and Democracy in Kurdistan (KADEK) and KONGRA-GEL.⁴⁵ In August 1999, the leader of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, called on the PKK to halt violent activities, and, in September 1999, a ceasefire

between the PKK and the Turkish government was proclaimed.⁴⁶ In April 2002, a dissolved PKK, under the framework of KADEK, stated that it would pursue Kurdish rights under the auspices of the Turkish state using political rather than armed struggle.⁴⁷ In May 2002, the EU stated that it still classified the PKK as a "terrorist" group and the Turkish government claimed that the PKK's transformation into KADEK was a ruse.⁴⁸ A June 2004 PKK announcement legitimized the use of armed defence as a PKK tactic based on the claim that the Turkish government had violated the 1999 ceasefire.⁴⁹ Since April 2005, there have been skirmishes between the Turkish Forces and the armed wing of the PKK, the **People's Defense Forces (Hezen Parastina Gel, HPG)**.⁵⁰

Revolutionary Left (Devrimci Sol, Dev-Sol): Dev-Sol was founded in 1978 by Dursun Karatas.⁵¹ Around 1993, Dev-Sol separated into two groups.⁵² One group, the "Karatas" faction, became the **Revolutionary People's Liberation Party - Front (Devrimci Halk Kurtulus Partisi - Cephisi, DHKP-C)** in March 1994.⁵³ The DHKP-C advocates a Marxist and anti-Western stance.⁵⁴

Other groups:⁵⁵

Communist Labor Party of Turkey-Leninist (Turkiye Komunist Emek Partisi-Leninist, TKEP-L), Communist Party of Turkey-Marxist Leninist (Turkiye Komunist Partisi-Marksist-Leninist, TKP-ML), Great Eastern Islamic Raiders-Front (Islami Buyuk Dogu Akincilari-Cephesi, BDA-C), Party of God (Hizbullah, unrelated to Hezbollah in Lebanon), Turkish Avenger Brigade (Turk Intikam Tugayi, TIT), Turkish Workers' and Peasants' Liberation Army (Turkiye Isci Koylu Kurtulus Ordusu, TIKKO), Unity (Tevhid).

5. FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

In May 2007, the Turkish parliament voted in favour of a constitutional amendment that would enable the president to be directly elected by the people with the possibility of serving two five-year terms.⁵⁶ In October 2007, Turkey will hold a referendum to determine the issue.⁵⁷

In the 1 May 2007 CrisisWatch bulletin, the International Crisis Group (ICG) cites growing tension between the AKP and secular opposition parties and the military.⁵⁸ Also in May 2007, pro-secular Turks organized and attended huge rallies in support of the country's secular institutions.⁵⁹

¹ Canada 26 Apr. 2007.

² BBC 17 April 2007; *PHW 2007* Oct. 2006, 1258.

³ BBC 17 Apr. 2007.

⁴ *International Herald Tribune* 23 Apr. 2007.

⁵ BBC 17 Apr. 2007.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ HRW 2006.

⁸ *PHW 2007* Oct. 2006, 1258.

⁹ BBC 27 Apr. 2007.

¹⁰ Freedom House 2006.

¹¹ *PHW 2007* Oct. 2006, 1258.

- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ EurActiv.com 26 July 2007.
- ¹⁴ RFE/RL 30 Apr. 2007.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Ibid.
- ¹⁷ *Washington Post* 3 May 2007.
- ¹⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁹ EurActiv.com 26 July 2007.
- ²⁰ BBC 23 July 2007.
- ²¹ Ibid. 17 Apr. 2007.
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ Ibid.
- ²⁴ Freedom House 2006.
- ²⁵ CFR 23 Apr. 2007.
- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ *Political Parties of the World* 2005, 599.
- ²⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁹ *PHW* 2007 Oct. 2006, 1259.
- ³⁰ Ibid.
- ³¹ Ibid.
- ³² EurActiv.com 26 July 2007.
- ³³ *PHW* 2007 Oct. 2006, 1259.
- ³⁴ *Political Parties of the World* 2005, 599.
- ³⁵ Ibid.
- ³⁶ *The Europa World Year Book 2006* 2006, 4384.
- ³⁷ *PHW* 2007 Oct. 2006, 1260.
- ³⁸ EurActiv.com 26 July 2007.
- ³⁹ *PHW* 2007 Oct. 2006, 1261.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid.
- ⁴¹ EurActiv.com 26 July 2007.
- ⁴² *The Europa World Year Book 2006* 2006, 4384.
- ⁴³ Compiled from: *The Europa World Year Book 2006* 2006; *PHW* 2007 Oct. 2006; *Political Parties of the World* 24 Jan. 2005.
- ⁴⁴ *The Europa World Year Book 2006* 2006, 4385.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ⁴⁶ *PHW* 2007 Oct. 2006, 1263.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid.
- ⁵¹ Ibid., 1262.
- ⁵² Ibid.
- ⁵³ Ibid.
- ⁵⁴ MIPT 1 Apr. 2007.
- ⁵⁵ *PHW* 2007 Oct. 2006, 1262-63.
- ⁵⁶ OSAC 11 May 2007.
- ⁵⁷ EurActiv.com 26 July 2007.
- ⁵⁸ ICG 1 May 2007.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid.

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