

Turkey: Extremism and Terrorism

On October 1, 2023, a suicide bomber detonated an explosive outside of Turkey's Interior Ministry building in Ankara. The explosion killed one and injured at least two others. Another attacker was "neutralized" at the scene. The assailants, who were members of the proscribed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), drove to the building's entrance where they were equipped with different types of guns, hand grenades, a rocket launcher, and explosives. The Turkish military responded to the attack by later that day destroying 20 PKK warehouses and hideouts in northern Iraq. A few days later, Turkey's Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan announced that all facilities and infrastructure belonging to the PKK and its Syrian offshoot the People's Protection Units (YPG) are now "legitimate targets" of Turkey's security forces and intelligence units. (Sources: [CNN](#), [Reuters](#))

Turkey has also attempted to neutralize key officials within ISIS. In April 2023, Turkey claimed former ISIS leader Abu al-Hussain al-Hussaini al-Qurashi had been killed in a Turkish intelligence operation in northern Syria. However, on August 3, 2023, ISIS released an audio statement in which the group's spokesman confirmed Abu al-Hussain's death during clashes with rival group, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). Details regarding the location and date of his death remain unclear, although HTS controls part of northwestern Syria and is accused by ISIS of being aligned with Turkey. ISIS's statement differs from Turkey's April 2023. In the same statement, the terror group also announced the appointment of Abu Hafis al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi as ISIS's new leader. (Source: [Wall Street Journal](#))

On June 1, 2023, Turkey's election board certified the results of the May 28 presidential runoff election, confirming the third term of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Erdoğan gained 52 percent of the national vote to secure his presidential term until 2028. Prior to the election, Erdoğan attempted to resolve stagnant issues by holding peace talks with Syria in Russia on May 10. Relations between Ankara and Damascus have been fractured for more than a decade given Turkey's backing of armed opposition groups seeking to remove Syrian President Bashar al-Assad from power. (Sources: [Associated Press](#), [CNN](#), [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [Associated Press](#))

Turkey remains obstinate in blocking Sweden's application to join NATO. According to Erdoğan, Turkey will continue to block Sweden's application as long as Stockholm allows Quran burnings and continues to harbor Kurdish militants. Finland and Sweden first applied to join NATO in May 2022 out of concern over the expansion of Russia's war with Ukraine. Following a Quran burning led by a Danish far-right political leader in Sweden in January 2022, Turkish intelligence broke up a 15-member ISIS cell on February 4, 2023. The cell allegedly sought to carry out attacks on the Swedish and Dutch embassies in Istanbul as well as synagogues and churches throughout the city. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [Guardian](#), [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [U.S. Embassy and Consulates in Türkiye](#), [Reuters](#), [BBC News](#), [I24 News](#))

Overview

Turkey is a predominantly Sunni Muslim country and the only Muslim-majority country in NATO. In recent years, Islamist terror groups including [ISIS](#) have consolidated on Turkey's borders with Syria and Iraq. Large numbers of foreign fighters have also crossed through Turkey, hoping to join these groups. Following decades of attempted Kurdish secession, Ankara has nervously witnessed the formation of a Kurdish statelet in northern Syria. Meanwhile, refugees have flooded into Turkey from conflict areas in Syria and Iraq, with some three million in the country as of April 2018. (Sources: [Independent](#), [UNHCR](#), [Guardian](#), [European Commission](#), [Washington Post](#))

Extremist groups inside Turkey subscribe to Kurdish separatist, far-left, and Islamist ideologies. The Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karekeren Kurdistan or PKK) has fought for the establishment of a Kurdish state since 1984. The Turkish government classifies the PKK as the most dangerous terror group inside Turkey. Critics have argued that Turkey's longstanding issues with the country's Kurds, and especially the PKK, have driven Ankara to target the PKK more heavily than ISIS. Nonetheless, the PKK and its offshoots have claimed responsibility for a spate of high-profile terrorist attacks, including the deadly March 13, 2016, car bomb attack in Ankara that killed 37 people and wounded over 125. Turkey has launched numerous cross-border operations into northern Iraq targeting PKK positions. Since 2015, however, at least 97 civilians have allegedly been killed and another 103 wounded by Turkish strikes in Iraq's Kurdistan region. Turkey has stated it will continue to protect its border from the PKK, but it is ready to cooperate with Iraq as it is ultimately the Iraqi government's responsibility to act against the PKK in its territory. (Sources: [Australian National Security](#), [BBC News](#), [Reuters](#), [Anadolu Agency](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [Middle East Eye](#))

ISIS has also become increasingly active within Turkey. Authorities believe that the terror group has been behind several major domestic terrorist attacks, including the October 10, 2015, suicide bombings at a peace rally in Ankara that killed 201 people and wounded more than 500; the January 12, 2016, suicide bombing in the central district of Sultanahmet in Istanbul; the June 28, 2016, suicide bombings at Turkey's Atatürk international airport; and the August 20, 2016, suicide bomb blast at a Kurdish wedding in Gaziantep that killed 57 people. ISIS claimed responsibility for the January 1, 2017, nightclub shooting in Istanbul that left 39 people dead. The shooter, Abdulkadir Masharipov, was an Uzbek national who

Turkey: Extremism and Terrorism

authorities believe had contact with Syrian-based ISIS operatives. (Sources: [CNN](#), [Guardian](#), [Hurriyet Daily News](#), [Guardian](#), [Wall Street Journal](#))

In addition to executing numerous terrorist attacks within Turkey, ISIS has used the country as a base for recruitment and facilitation of foreign fighters. An ISIS cell called Dokumacilar in southern Turkey has recruited young Kurdish Turks to fight for the terror group in Syria and wage attacks in Turkey. As of November 2015, between 2,000 and 2,200 Turkish fighters have left the country to fight alongside extremist groups. More than 600 are believed to have returned to Turkey. According to September 2015 government estimates, approximately 900 fighters are believed to have joined ISIS, whereas 200-300 are suspected to have joined the [Nusra Front](#). (Sources: [International Business Times](#), [Hurriyet Daily News](#), [Soufan Group](#))

In addition to ISIS and the PKK, Islamic extremist groups reportedly operating in Turkey include [al-Qaeda](#), Turkish Hezbollah (separate from Lebanese Hezbollah), the [Muslim Brotherhood](#), and [Hamas](#). A far-left terror group called the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP/C) has targeted U.S. interests in Turkey in its mission to topple the Turkish government and erect a Marxist state. (Sources: [Oxford Islamic Studies Online](#), [Long War Journal](#), [Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#), [YNet](#))

Up until 2015, Turkey had responded permissively to the threat of Islamic extremism. That appeared to change in mid-2015 when Turkey announced a major crackdown on terrorist organizations, including ISIS. The government also finally allowed NATO jets to use its airbase at Incirlik, previously an issue of long-standing contention. (Sources: [CNN](#), [Carnegie Europe](#), [Politico](#))

The U.S. State Department, in its 2015 Country Reports on Terrorism, confirmed that the Turkish government served as a “critical geographic chokepoint in the flow of foreign terrorist fighters” to Syria by stepping up border security, establishing “risk analysis units” to stop suspected foreign fighters at airports, increasing information sharing with foreign countries, and increasing “detentions, arrests, and prosecutions” of foreign fighters. Nonetheless, the U.S. State Department noted in its 2015 report that Turkey remained the “main transit point” for foreign fighters in 2015. In its 2017 report, the State Department noted that Turkey remained “a source and transit country” for foreign fighters. Following the catastrophic earthquakes of February 2023, Turkey has become even more vulnerable to ISIS fighters crossing into Turkey from Syria and Iraq. The ongoing security challenge has resulted in the Turkish government strengthening police and surveillance powers to monitor communications, movement, and briefly detain suspects for short-term detention for purposes of questioning. Although ISIS remains a threat, Turkey has periodically focused its police and surveillance efforts on containing the PKK. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [International Crisis Group](#))

Radicalization and Foreign Fighters

Homegrown extremism in Turkey is tied to Kurdish nationalism, Islamism, and far-left and far-right ideologies. Since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011, outside jihadist elements operating in Turkey include ISIS cells, as well as foreign fighters crossing the country seeking to enter Syria.

Homegrown Radicalization

Far-left, Islamist, and far-right extremist groups emerged in Turkey in the late 1960s. What began as the promulgation of socialism on college campuses and mass demonstrations against Turkey's NATO membership soon turned into guerilla warfare in the name of Marxism. Student-led groups launched numerous terror attacks starting in the early 1970s—including against American soldiers—in the belief that Turkey was culturally, economically, and militarily dominated by the United States. These groups believed that violence was the means to expel American influence and inaugurate a socialist Turkey. Many of these early extremist leaders were eventually handed the death sentence or killed by security forces in battle, and the groups ultimately lost power. (Source: [Terrorism in Turkey \(Dr. Atilla Yayla\)](#))

Another wave of terrorism hit Turkey in 1975. In 1980, the Turkish military launched a coup d'état in an attempt to clamp down on the violence. This resulted in several years of relative peace. But by the mid-1980s, old extremist organizations were regrouping and waging violent attacks, and new groups were forming. The late 1980s and early 1990s saw an increase in Kurdish separatism, specifically with the creation of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karekeren Kurdistan, or PKK) in 1987. Today, Kurdish separatism and Islamism are the most prominent ideologies among Turkey's extremist groups. (Sources: [Terrorism in Turkey \(Dr. Atilla Yayla\)](#), [Terrorism in Turkey \(Ulkumen Rodoplu, Jeffrey Arnold, Gurkan Ersoy\)](#))

Kurdish Separatism

Turkey: Extremism and Terrorism

The primary goal of Kurdish separatist groups in Turkey is to establish an autonomous Kurdistan. The proposed area would cover current day southeastern Turkey, western Iran, and northern Syria and Iraq. Factors driving Kurdish separatist groups include a struggle to retain Kurdish cultural identity, as well as grievances stemming from economic disparities between Turkey's Kurdish population and the Western Turkish population. Kurdish separatists were further incited following the formation of the de facto Kurdish state in northern Iraq at the end of the first Gulf War. (Source: [Terrorism in Turkey \(Ulkumen Rodoplu, Jeffrey Arnold, Gurkan Ersoy\)](#))

The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency estimates Turkey's Kurdish population at approximately 15.2 million, or 19 percent of the country. (Source: [CIA World Factbook](#))

PKK

The Turkish government classifies the secular Kurdistan Workers' Party (Partiya Karekera Kurdistan, or PKK) as the largest and most powerful terror group inside its borders. The PKK seeks the creation of an independent Kurdish state comprising autonomous regions of Turkey, Syria, and Iraq, and promotes violence to achieve its goals. It has been involved in an armed struggle since 1984, but was officially established in 1987 by Abdullah Ocalan. Since then, it has waged terror on military, government, and civilian targets, resulting in the death of at least 40,000. (Sources: [Australian National Security](#), [PISM \(2015\)](#), [BBC News](#))

The PKK has Marxist-Leninist roots, but its leader, Abdullah Ocalan, disavowed socialist ideology when he was imprisoned in 1999. During this year, the group quieted its demands for an autonomous Kurdish state and instead called for greater autonomy within Turkey. The PKK and Turkish government entered a fragile ceasefire, which was broken in 2004 when the PKK resumed its terrorist campaign. An additional ceasefire in 2009 came to an end in 2011. (Sources: [BBC News](#), [Australian National Security](#), [PISM \(2015\)](#))

In March 2013, the PKK called for a unilateral ceasefire and entered into peace talks with the Turkish government. Despite continued calls by Ocalan for disarmament, PKK elements have continued to wage intermittent terror attacks inside Turkey. PKK insurgents have targeted police and military interests, sabotaged infrastructure such as dams, pipelines, and power plants, and kidnapped civilians and military personnel. The attacks have been largely concentrated in the country's southeast, though PKK attacks have reached Ankara and Istanbul. The group is also known to have training camps in northern Iraq. (Sources: [Australian National Security](#), [BBC News](#))

The ceasefire between the PKK and the Turkish government ended in July 2015. According to the Turkish government, more than 1,000 government security personnel have since died in fighting with the PKK. (Source: [U.S. Department of State](#))

PKK forces and the affiliated Syrian-based People's Protection Units (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel, or YPG) battled ISIS in northern Syria in July 2014. Hundreds of Turkish PKK members crossed into Syria to join the fight. The PKK has accused the Turkish government of tacitly backing ISIS's fight against the Kurds by failing to take action against ISIS. Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu has said that "There is no difference between PKK and Daesh," using an Arabic acronym for ISIS. (Sources: [Gulf News](#), [Associated Press](#), [Newsweek](#))

The Turkish government has prosecuted hundreds of PKK terrorists under the country's counterterrorism laws. The PKK has been designated as a terrorist organization by Turkey, the United States, the European Union, the United Kingdom, Canada, Austria, Azerbaijan, Iraq, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Kazakhstan, Moldova, New Zealand, and the Philippines. (Sources: [BBC News](#), [Australian National Security](#))

TAK

The Kurdistan Freedom Falcons (Teyrebazen Azadiye Kurdistan, or TAK) is a terrorist organization affiliated with the PKK, according to the January 2008 U.S. Department of State designation of the group. The TAK was reportedly established by PKK leaders in 1999, following the arrest of PKK founder Abdullah Ocalan. In 2004, however, the TAK accused the PKK of pacifism and publicly split from the group. The PKK offshoot is purportedly comprised of young urban recruits and has carried out a series of terrorist attacks in Turkish cities. The TAK has conducted more than a dozen deadly attacks throughout the country, including the February 2016 bombing of a Turkish military convoy in Ankara and the December 2016 bombings outside of a sports stadium in Istanbul. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#), [Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium](#), [Combating Terrorism Center](#), [Reuters](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [Guardian](#))

The Turkish government, however, denies the TAK split from the PKK and claims that it is a terrorist proxy for its parent organization. Security analysts report that the TAK is linked to the PKK through ideological doctrine, military training, recruitment, and the supply of weaponry but that it

Turkey: Extremism and Terrorism

independently coordinates and conducts attacks. The TAK has been designated as a terrorist organization by the United States, Turkey, and the European Union. (Sources: [Guardian](#), [Middle East Eye](#), [Combating Terrorism Center](#))

ISIS Islamists in Turkey

Turkish authorities have held ISIS responsible for multiple largescale terrorist attacks within the country since mid-2015. In July of that year, suspected ISIS member and Turkish Kurd ?eyh Abdurrahman Alagöz carried out a suicide bombing in the southern town of Suruç, killing 32 leftist activists. That October, Alagöz’s brother, Yunus Emre Alagöz, was one of two suicide bombers who killed 102 people and wounded more than 400 at a peace rally in Ankara. (Sources: [Guardian](#), [NTV](#), [Telegraph](#), [Guardian](#), [Guardian](#))

Turkish authorities [connected](#) the Alagöz brothers to an ISIS unit known as Dokumacılar, believed to operate in Turkey’s southeastern province of Adiyaman. Its members reportedly train in Raqqa, Syria, as suicide bombers before returning to Turkey to carry out attacks. The unit is believed to have waged attacks in Ankara, Istanbul, Suruç, and Gaziantep. (Sources: [International Business Times](#), [Medya 365](#))

In October 2015, suspected ISIS militants murdered two Syrian activists in the Turkish border city of Sanliurfa, slitting the throat of one and beheading the other. One week later, Turkish authorities arrested 20 suspected members of ISIS in Antalya, southwest Turkey, one week before the city hosted the G20 summit attended by then-U.S. President Barack Obama. In mid-November, Turkish authorities in the southern province of Adana detained 38 foreign nationals suspected of traveling to join ISIS in Syria. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [BBC News](#), [Hurriyet Daily News](#))

ISIS attacks in Turkey continued into 2016 and 2017. On March 19, 2016, an ISIS suicide bomber killed four people in Istanbul’s popular shopping district, Istiklal Street. According to Turkish and U.S. officials, ISIS also played a role in the June 28, 2016, suicide bombings at Ataturk international airport, though no group formally claimed responsibility for the attack. Turkish authorities also linked ISIS to an August 2016 suicide bombing at a wedding in Gaziantep that killed 57 people. ISIS claimed responsibility for a shooting at Istanbul’s Reina nightclub on the morning of January 1, 2017, that left 39 dead and dozens more wounded. (Sources: [Fox News](#), [BBC News](#), [CNN](#), [BBC News](#), [New York Times](#), [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [Hurriyet Daily News](#))

Analysts have criticized Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan for a lack of action against ISIS, voicing concerns that the government targets the PKK more actively than it does ISIS. Ankara launched a new round of airstrikes against the PKK in July 2015, officially ending peace talks that started in 2013. But the PKK and its Syrian-based Kurdish allies, the People’s Protection Units (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel, or YPG), have been instrumental in fighting ISIS in Syria. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [Atlantic](#))

Out of 1,300 terrorist suspects arrested by the Turkish government in or around August 2015, 137 were linked to ISIS while 847 were linked to the PKK. Erdoğan has said that Turkey “will never allow the establishment of a new state on our southern frontier in the north of Syria.” The counterterrorism policies of Erdoğan’s Justice and Development Party’s (AKP) have led some analysts to speculate that Turkey may prefer ISIS to an independent Syrian Kurdish state on its border. (Source: [New York Times](#))

Pressure from the United States combined with ISIS’s presence on the Syrian border caused Turkey—a member of the U.S.’s anti-ISIS coalition—to increase airstrikes against the extremist group. In July 2015, the Turkish government agreed to open southeastern bases—including the Incirlik airbase—to the U.S. military to target ISIS positions in Syria and Iraq. (Sources: [Time](#), [BBC News](#), [International Business Times](#))

Despite the defeat of ISIS’s physical caliphate in 2018, ISIS sympathizers continue to utilize Turkish resources. A 2020 report by the Lead Inspector General for the U.S. military’s mission in Syria and Iraq concluded Turkey continues to be a regional transit hub for ISIS. Turkey has increased its surveillance of ISIS activities within its borders. In February 2021, for example, Turkish authorities intercepted three New Zealanders, including an alleged female ISIS member, attempting to enter the country from Syria. In May 2021, authorities in Istanbul arrested a close aid of deceased ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. That same month, the United States sanctioned Syrian national Alaa Khanfurah for using a Turkey-based money service business to transfer funds to ISIS members throughout Syria, in part through the direct financial ties Khanfurah maintained with ISIS financial facilitators. The U.S. government also sanctioned the Turkey-based Al-Fay Company, which U.S.-designated Iraqi national Idris al-Fay used to facilitate the global distribution of currency on behalf of ISIS. (Sources: [Stars and Stripes](#), [Guardian](#), [Associated Press](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [U.S. Department of the Treasury](#))

On May 26, 2022, media sources announced that Turkish anti-terrorism police and intelligence agents recently conducted a raid in Istanbul that reportedly resulted in the capture of Abu Hasan al-Hashimi al-Qurashi, the current leader of ISIS. The operation was conducted following a lengthy police surveillance of a house in which al-Qurashi was allegedly staying in. Reports of al-Qurashi’s capture were never confirmed, and on November 30, 2022, ISIS announced the death of al-Qurashi. In an official statement, the group claimed the deceased leader was killed in action but

Turkey: Extremism and Terrorism

offered no other explanation regarding his death (Sources: [Bloomberg News](#), [Daily Mail](#), [Mirror](#))

Less than a year following al-Qurashi's death, Turkey's National Intelligence Organization (MIT) carried out an operation resulting in the death of ISIS successor Abu al-Hussain al-Hussaini al-Qurashi in Syria's Afrin province. On April 29, 2023, MIT agents reportedly surrounded a house harboring Abu al-Hussain, leading the ISIS leader to detonate a suicide vest to evade capture and detention. Erdoğan confirmed the death of Abu al-Hussain the next day. ISIS did not confirm his death until August 3, 2023. However, according to the statement, Abu al-Hussain was killed in clashes with rival group, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). Details regarding the location and timeline of his death remain unclear, although HTS controls part of northwest Syria and is accused by ISIS of working in Turkey's favor. (Sources: [CBS News](#), [Agence France Presse](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), [Defense Post](#))

Kurdish Hezbollah

Kurdish Hezbollah (KH), also known as Turkish Hezbollah, is a Kurdish Sunni Muslim extremist group operating in southeast Turkey, directing violence against the PKK and the Turkish government. Founded in 1978, its leaders were heavily influenced by the Iranian revolution and reportedly received training in Iran. It has violently clashed with the PKK in southeast Turkey. Today, KH continues to battle the PKK and Turkish security forces in an effort to erect an independent Islamic state in southeast Turkey. (Sources: [Al-Monitor](#), [Oxford Islamic Studies Online](#))

In January 2000, the Turkish military cracked down on KH, killing the group's founder, Huseyin Velioglu, in a shootout in Istanbul. The military arrested nearly 6,000 KH members in subsequent operations. Isa Altsoy assumed leadership of KH and renounced violence in an attempt to regain popular support. (Sources: [Al-Monitor](#), [Oxford Islamic Studies Online](#))

KH promotes Islamic identity first and Kurdish identity second. It believes that all Kurdish groups, including the staunchly secular PKK, should address Kurdish issues inside an Islamic framework. Under an Islamic state, KH believes, the "Kurdish problem" will be solved. The group has reportedly been influenced by the works of the Egyptian Islamist Sayyid Qutb as well as Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the founder and former leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran. (Sources: [Al-Monitor](#), [Oxford Islamic Studies Online](#))

KH does not directly support ISIS, but a KH splinter group is reportedly fighting alongside the terror group in Syria. (Source: [Al-Monitor](#))

Al-Qaeda

[Al-Qaeda](#) operatives in Turkey have carried out numerous attacks, including the Istanbul synagogue and British consulate bombings in 2003, as well as the 2008 bombings of the U.S. consulate in Istanbul. Turkish security has also foiled al-Qaeda plots targeting Turkish and American interests inside the country. A document seized in a July 2011 raid on a Turkish al-Qaeda cell near Ankara reportedly read, "It is more advantageous to wage jihad against Turkey than the United States." (Sources: [Long War Journal](#), [Eurasia Review](#))

In November 2015, Turkish authorities detained 18 suspected members of al-Qaeda's Syrian affiliate, the Nusra Front. These individuals were reportedly recruiting for the terror group inside Turkey. (Source: [Reuters](#))

Turkish authorities have continued to act against alleged al-Qaeda operatives in its territory. In August 2020, police arrested accused al-Qaeda operative Taner Kusioglu in the Hatay province. The following month, Turkish forces arrested alleged al-Qaeda figure Islom Saydalimov, also in the Hatay province. (Sources: [Anadolu Agency](#), [Anadolu Agency](#))

Muslim Brotherhood

The international [Muslim Brotherhood](#) reportedly regrouped in Istanbul following the ouster of Egyptian President [Mohammed Morsi](#) in July 2013. Turkey has also reportedly provided the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood with weaponry and activists. Analysts have posited that Turkey's support for the Muslim Brotherhood highlights Erdoğan's ties and ideological closeness to the Islamist group. However, Turkey's relations with the Brotherhood weakened after staunchly anti-Brotherhood Abdel Fattah el-Sisi assumed the Egyptian presidency in June 2014. Turkey feared alienation and economic reprisal from el-Sisi's [Egypt](#) and the anti-Brotherhood Gulf states—on which Turkey remains highly economically dependent—and cooled its open support for the Brotherhood. In the months following el-Sisi's inauguration, the Turkish government refrained from condemning el-Sisi's actions and officially congratulated him on his election to office. (Sources: [Al Arabiya](#), [Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#), [Washington Institute for Near East Policy](#))

Turkey: Extremism and Terrorism

Hamas

[Hamas](#), the U.S.-designated Palestinian terror group active in the Gaza Strip, created a bureau in Istanbul in 2012 under the direction of [Saleh al-Arouri](#), a senior Hamas leader and military commander. In an August 2014 Islamic conference in Istanbul, Arouri claimed responsibility on behalf of Hamas for orchestrating the kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teenagers earlier that summer. (Sources: [Haaretz](#), [Washington Post](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [Times of Israel](#), [Times of Israel](#), [YNet](#), [YNet](#))

Turkish authorities have reportedly overseen Hamas military training exercises in the country. Hamas operatives working in Turkey actively recruit Palestinians living in Turkey, Jordan, Syria, and other Arab countries. The recruits are sent to the bureau in Istanbul, where they reportedly receive security clearances and begin training outside of the city under the auspices of Turkish officials. In addition, many of the weapons used by Hamas operatives in the West Bank were reportedly supplied by the group's Istanbul bureau. (Sources: [Al-Monitor](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [YNet](#), [Gatestone Institute](#))

During the July 2014 conflict between Hamas and Israel, Turkey was considered one of Hamas's closest international allies. Because of its close ties to Hamas, the United States invited Turkey to a Paris meeting in mid July 2014 to discuss a ceasefire between Hamas and Israel. In December 2014, then-Hamas leader [Khaled Meshaal](#) spoke at an AKP event in Konya, Turkey, and congratulated the crowd on having Erdoğan and Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu as leaders. The crowd responded with shouts of "Down with Israel!" In August 2015, Meshaal met with Turkish leaders in Ankara, though the specifics of the meeting were not publicly revealed. (Sources: [Middle East Eye](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [Time](#), [Foreign Policy](#), [Jerusalem Post](#))

The Obama administration repeatedly appealed to the Turkish government to end its relationship with Hamas, without success. An Al-Monitor report in August 2014 posited, "The Turkish government has been rather frank and 'proud' of its engagement with the organization despite all financial and political repercussions." Erdoğan regularly refers to Hamas militants as "freedom fighters." (Sources: [Al-Monitor](#), [Today's Zaman](#))

Arab media reported in December 2015 that Turkey had expelled Arouri under U.S. and Israeli pressure as the Turkish and Israeli governments moved toward reconciliation. Hamas denied the reports. In the June 2016 reconciliation agreement between Israel and Turkey, the Turkish government agreed not to allow fundraising for Hamas within its territory. Hamas has rejected the reconciliation agreement, but reportedly acceded to Turkish demands that it not react. In February 2017, Turkey hosted the "Conference for Palestinians Abroad," which included several members of Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood among its speakers. (Sources: [Jerusalem Post](#), [Times of Israel](#), [Jerusalem Post](#), [Times of Israel](#), [Middle East Monitor](#), [Times of Israel](#))

Despite Turkey's agreement with Israel, Hamas has continued to use Istanbul as a planning base for terrorist activities. At least a dozen Hamas members moved to Istanbul in 2019, according to Israeli and Egyptian intelligence. This includes U.S.-designated financiers such as Kamal Awad, and military leaders who planned spats of suicide bombings in Israel in the 1990s. Turkey has continued to deny that Hamas is a terrorist organization and Turkish intelligence agents reportedly maintain close contact with Hamas operatives in Istanbul. (Sources: [Telegraph](#), [Jerusalem Post](#))

The Turkish government has also continued to welcome Hamas's leadership in the country for high-level meetings with Turkish officials, including Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. In December 2019, Erdoğan met with a visiting Hamas delegation that included political leader [Ismail Haniyeh](#) on his first trip out of the Gaza Strip in three years. Arouri also attended the meeting, though both he and Haniyeh are under U.S. sanctions and have reward offers for their arrest. Nonetheless, they moved about freely in Turkey. Following the meeting, Erdoğan told media that Turkey "will keep on supporting our brothers in Palestine." The U.S. State Department condemned the Turkish government in August 2020 after the latter hosted Haniyeh in Istanbul for high-level government meetings. Also, that month, Turkey allegedly gave approximately 12 Hamas leaders Turkish passports. A State Department statement said the United States continues to "raise our concerns about the Turkish government's relationship with Hamas at the highest levels." Ankara rejected international criticism of its relations with Hamas, claiming a "balanced policy" that will help solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, instead of "serving Israel's interests." (Sources: [Telegraph](#), [Jerusalem Post](#), [Jerusalem Post](#), [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#))

In 2018, Hamas reportedly created a secret cyberwarfare and counter-intelligence headquarters in Istanbul. The British *Times* newspaper revealed details of the network in October 2020. Reportedly, Gaza-based Hamas agent Samakh Saraj runs the network without the knowledge of Turkish officials and separately from Hamas's offices in the city. According to the *Times*, the network coordinates cyber-operations against Hamas's enemies in the Arab world, including the Palestinian Authority and Middle Eastern and European embassies of countries such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The network also surveils and sometimes interrogates Hamas members suspected of disloyalty. (Source: [Times](#))

In October 2020, a U.S. court ruled that a case may move forward in the American justice system against Turkish bank Kuveyt Turk, which allegedly "knowingly maintained several bank accounts for a Hamas operative who was the terrorist organization's primary Turkish fundraising

Turkey: Extremism and Terrorism

entity.” The suit was brought forward by the heirs of U.S. national Eitam Henkin and his non-U.S. national wife Naama Henkin, who died in a 2015 Hamas attack in the West Bank. The suit alleges Kuveyt Turk aided the Henkins’ murders by providing banking services to Hamas operative Jihad Yaghmour and the Hamas-run Islamic University of Gaza. It also accuses Turkey of providing “major political and financial” support to Hamas. (Sources: [Arab News](#), [Leagle](#), [Wall Street Journal](#))

Hamas agents in Turkey have also sought to use Turkish companies to transfer materials and funds to Gaza and the West Bank. In February 2017, Israel arrested Muhammad Murtaja, the Gaza coordinator of the Turkish Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA), on charges of fundraising for Hamas’s military wing. A year later in February 2018, Israeli authorities arrested a Turkish citizen and an Arab-Israeli suspected of fundraising and laundering money on behalf of Hamas. Following that arrest, a Hamas official in Lebanon praised Turkey’s “loyalty” to the Palestinian people. Murtaja was sentenced to nine years in prison in 2018. In January 2021, Israeli authorities seized more than \$120,000 and goods worth hundreds of thousands of shekels that Hamas was allegedly transferring from Turkey to the West Bank. According to the Israeli Defense Ministry, Hamas used West Bank-based company Sense Sanitary Company and Turkish company Tikkno Plus Ic Ve Dis to transfer the money and goods to the West Bank. The companies are jointly owned by Hamas operatives Abdallah Fuqaha in Turkey and Ayman al-Massri in the West Bank. Israel has demanded Turkey end Hamas’s military activities in Istanbul before the two could countries fully restore diplomatic ties. (Sources: [Jerusalem Post](#), [Times of Israel](#), [Anadolu Agency](#), [Israel Defense](#), [Israel Defense](#), [Times of Israel](#), [Arab News](#))

During Hamas’s 21-day conflict with Israel in May 2021, Turkish officials issued statements seemingly in support of Hamas. Erdoğan referred to Israel as a “terror state,” while Vice President Fuat Oktay called on Muslim nations to “take a clear stance” against Israel’s strikes on the Gaza Strip. Though Turkey was not a party to ceasefire talks during that conflict, Erdoğan maintained open communications with Hamas’s leaders and reassured Haniyeh of Turkey’s continued support for the Palestinian people. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Anadolu Agency](#))

A series of events in November 2021 highlighted Turkey’s ongoing relationship with Hamas and how it complicates Turkey’s relationship with Israel. On November 20, Haniyeh praised Turkey for its “critical” role providing political support for Hamas and the Palestinian cause. On November 21, Hamas member Sheikh Fadi Abu Shkhaydam killed one and wounded four during a shooting attack in Jerusalem’s Old City. According to Israeli security, Shkhaydam had visited Turkey prior to the attack and allegedly received instructions from Hamas leaders there. Shkhaydam’s family denied he had met with Hamas in Turkey, instead claiming he had gone to visit his son who is studying in the country. On November 22, Israel’s Shin Bet security organization announced it had broken up a Hamas cell in the West Bank and seized explosive belts, weapons, and an undisclosed amount of money. The Shin Bet accused Arouri and Zacharia Najib—released during the 2011 Gilad Shalit prisoner swap—of directing the cell from Turkey. Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid called on the Turkish government to close Hamas’s offices in the country. In response, Erdoğan has sent mixed messages to Israel, with whom Turkey was earlier that month negotiating for the release of two Israeli tourists accused of espionage in Turkey. A November 24 statement from Erdoğan accused Israel of “oppressive” policies regarding the Palestinians and his government “must work with all our might to preserve the status and sanctity of Jerusalem, the capital of Palestine.” On November 29, without referencing Hamas, Erdoğan announced Turkey would seek to improve its relations with Israel. In February 2022, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu declared Turkey would not turn its back on the Palestinians to improve relations with Israel. Nonetheless, the two countries exchanged high-level diplomatic delegations that month ahead of a planned March 2022 visit to Turkey by Israeli President Isaac Herzog. Israeli officials have continued to stress that any normalization between the countries must include limiting Hamas’s activities in Turkey. Efforts at reconciliation continued between Turkey and Israel in September 2023, when the two heads of government met face-to-face during the high-level United Nations General Assembly. The two discussed cooperation on energy, technology, and cyber security. (Sources: [Daily Sabah](#), [Jerusalem Post](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [Times of Israel](#), [Times of Israel](#), [Times of Israel](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [Axios](#), [Reuters](#))

Taliban

After the Taliban violently seized control of Afghanistan in August 2021, the international community largely withdrew its diplomatic missions in the country. Turkey maintained its embassy in Afghanistan and confirmed its relations with Afghanistan’s new Taliban government. Turkey called on other government to establish ties with the Taliban government while making overtures to increasing diplomatic and economic cooperation with the Taliban. Turkey has called on the international community to engage with the Taliban government, though Turkey has also clarified that recognition and engagement are separate issues. In October 2021, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu stated the international community’s goal should be preventing the collapse of the Afghan economy. (Sources: [Hurriyet Daily News](#), [Reuters](#), [Agence France-Presse](#))

Revolutionary People’s Liberation Party/Front

Turkey: Extremism and Terrorism

Formed in 1978, the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP/C) has led a violent campaign in Turkey for more than three decades. Designated as a terrorist organization by Turkey, the United States, and the European Union, the DHKP/C has killed dozens of police officers and military personnel as well as over 80 civilians. The organization's goals include the overthrow of the Turkish state, establishment of a Marxist government, and removal of U.S. and NATO influence from Turkey. The party opposes U.S. imperialism and has targeted U.S. military personnel and diplomatic missions. (Sources: [BBC News](#), [National Counterterrorism Center](#))

The group was originally established under the name Devrimci Sol or Dev Sol but splintered in 1994 due to factional infighting, resulting in the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front. The party has recruited from high schools and universities, but today draws most of its members from the urban poor. After generating mass appeal in the 1970s and 1980s, it lost influence partially as a result of the fall of Soviet communism at the end of the Cold War. Turkish police raids caused many DHKP/C leaders to flee and disperse across Europe in 2004. Founding leader Dursun Karatas died from cancer while in exile in the Netherlands in 2008. (Sources: [BBC News](#), [National Counterterrorism Center](#))

Members of the organization have included students, lawyers, and reporters. In 2000, DHKP/C inmates staged a long-running hunger strike in protest of high-security jails. During that decade, the group began imitating tactics used by al-Qaeda including suicide bombings and targeted assassinations. The suicide bombing at the U.S. embassy in Ankara in February 2013 was the terror group's most notable attack. The blast killed the bomber and one security guard. Analysts have argued the group may be experiencing a revival due to increased U.S.-Turkish cooperation on foreign policy. In its 2018 Terrorism Situation and Trend Report, EUROPOL reported that DHKP/C maintains a logistical and support network within the European Union. (Sources: [BBC News](#), [National Counterterrorism Center](#), [EUROPOL](#), [Washington Post](#))

Fethullah Terrorist Organization

The Fethullah Terrorist Organization (FETO) is the Turkish label for followers of Fethullah Gülen, a U.S.-based Turkish cleric whom President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan blames for inciting riots and terrorism against the Turkish government. Gülen, who promotes a moderate, pro-Western style of Sunni Islam, left Turkey for self-imposed exile in Pennsylvania in 1999. Turkey designated FETO as a terrorist organization in May 2016. Erdoğan blamed Gülen and his followers—also referred to in Turkey as Gulenists—for instigating a July 2016 coup attempt. At least 290 people were killed and more than 1,400 wounded during the fighting, during which bombs exploded around Turkey's parliament building and Turkish tanks entered Ankara and Istanbul. Erdoğan believes Gulenists have infiltrated Turkey's military, judicial, and governing authorities in order to influence the government. Human rights organizations have accused the Turkish government of orchestrating the unlawful arrest, imprisonment, and torture of Gulenists in Turkey. According to the Turkish interior ministry, 35,145 suspected Gulenists were detained between January 2, 2017, and October 30, 2017. By November 2017, the Turkish government had dismissed 150,000 civil servants since the coup attempt for alleged links to FETO or terrorism. (Sources: [CNN](#), [Hurriyet Daily News](#), [U.S. Department of Justice](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [Fethullah Gülen](#), [Reuters](#), [CNN](#))

Erdoğan has demanded Gülen's extradition, which the U.S. government has so far refused. In September 2018, Erdoğan called on Germany to designate FETO a terrorist organization. German Chancellor Angela Merkel said her government needed more evidence before it would act against the movement. (Sources: [Hurriyet Daily News](#), [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#))

According to a report in 2023, imprisoned FETO members maintain their network's loyalty through a series of "persuaders" in prisons promising higher rank and status within the organization to inmates when they are released. Reportedly, FETO also maintains "victim superintendents" who ensure that convicts do not feel too isolated, as well as "money-spinners" who collect payments from businesspeople to be allocated to jailed members. (Source: [Daily Sabah](#))

Foreign Fighters

Turkey shares a 775-mile border with Syria over which thousands of foreign fighters have crossed. As of April 2017, approximately 2,100 Turks have left the country to fight with extremist groups, according to official government counts. More than 600 are believed to have returned to Turkey. According to September 2015 government estimates, approximately 900 fighters are believed to have joined ISIS, whereas 200-300 are suspected to have joined the Nusra Front. By July 2017, the Turkish government said it had banned 53,000 foreign fighters from entering the country and deported 5,000 people linked to terrorism. (Sources: [Time](#), [Soufan Group](#), [International Business Times](#), [Hurriyet Daily News](#), [Hurriyet Daily News](#))

Huseyin Mustafa Peri is one such Turkish citizen who joined ISIS in September 2014. He was captured in June 2015 and held by the YPG in Syria. In a video shared with Al-Monitor, Peri claimed the average age of fighters in ISIS's Turkish unit is 20 to 22. According to Peri, many Turks travel to Syria to join ISIS after doing "research" or attending madrassas (religious schools) in which they are taught by jihadist preachers. Other Turks are recruited by jihadist recruiters in cities like Ankara, Istanbul, and Konya. (Source: [Al-Monitor](#))

Turkey: Extremism and Terrorism

Meanwhile, a notable number of young Kurds from southern Turkey have joined the PKK and the YPG's fight against ISIS in Syria. Factors influencing this decision may include unemployment, a lack of educational opportunities, and Turkish discrimination against Kurds. (Source: [Atlantic](#))

Major Extremist and Terrorist Incidents

Istanbul Nightclub Shooting

In the early morning of January 1, 2017, ISIS operative Abdulkadir Masharipov, a.k.a. Ebu Muhammed Horasani, killed 39 people and injured dozens more at Istanbul's Reina nightclub. ISIS claimed responsibility the following day, characterizing the gunman as a "soldier of the caliphate." After a two-week-long manhunt, Turkish authorities arrested Masharipov, an Uzbek national, in his Istanbul apartment, seizing weapons, ammunition, drones, and nearly \$200,000. Authorities believe Masharipov trained in both Afghanistan and Pakistan and had contact with Syrian-based ISIS operatives. He reportedly illegally entered Turkey from Iran in January 2016. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [Reuters](#), [Hurriyet Daily News](#), [Reuters](#), [BBC News](#))

December 10, 2016, Vodafone Stadium Attack

On December 10, 2016, two bombs exploded outside of a soccer stadium in Istanbul, killing 44 people and wounding 155 others. A car bomb detonated near the stadium's main entrance, hitting a police vehicle, and a suicide bomber exploded in a nearby park while surrounded by police. The twin bombings occurred approximately two hours after the end of a soccer match between Turkish teams Bursaspor and Besiktas. The TAK claimed responsibility for the attack. (Sources: [BBC News](#), [CNN](#), [BBC News](#), [Telegraph](#), [ABC News](#), [Guardian](#), [CNN](#))

The bombing came after several other TAK attacks across Turkey in 2016. On June 8, a TAK bomb attack targeting a police bus in Istanbul killed 11 people, including seven police officers. On March 13, a TAK militant detonated a car bomb in Turkey's capital of Ankara, killing 37 people and wounding over 125 more. In April, TAK militants detonated a bomb next to a military convoy in Ankara, killing 28 people and injuring more than 60 more. (Sources: [BBC News](#), [BBC News](#), [CNN](#), [New York Times](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [Reuters](#))

June 28, 2016, Ataturk International Airport Bombings

On June 28, 2016, three suicide bombers attacked Turkey's Ataturk international airport, killing 45 people, including foreign nationals, and wounding more than 230 others. Among the killed were at least five Saudi citizens and two Iraqi citizens, as well as at least one Tunisian citizen, one Uzbek citizen, one Chinese citizen, one Iranian, one Ukrainian, and one Jordanian. (Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#), [BBC News](#), [Guardian](#), [Reuters](#))

According to media reports, the assailants opened fire at the entrance to the airport. Two of the attackers then made their way inside, where one reportedly blew himself up in the arrivals area on the ground floor and the other detonated his suicide vest in the departures area on the second floor. As people fled the building, the third bomber detonated his explosives in the parking lot near the entrance to the terminal. (Sources: [Washington Post](#), [CNN](#), [Telegraph](#), [Reuters](#))

Turkish authorities believe the assailants were affiliated with [ISIS](#). Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim and CIA Director John Brennan have also indicated their suspicions that ISIS was behind the attack, although no group claimed responsibility. (Sources: [CNN](#))

According to Turkey's Anadolu News Agency, the suicide bombers were from Russia, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan. Reports indicate that the organizer of the attack was [Akhmed Chatayev](#), a U.N.- and U.S.-sanctioned Chechen who trained Russian-speaking recruits for ISIS, and whose current location is unknown. Former Guantanamo Bay detainee Airat Vakhitov (a.k.a. Salman Bulgarsky) was reported to be among those arrested. Two of the bombers suspected to have carried out the attacks were ISIS fighters Vadim Osmanov and Rakim Bulgarov. (Sources: [Fox News](#), [BBC News](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), [CNN](#), [Associated Press](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), [NBC News](#), [BBC News](#), [Voice of America](#))

According to Turkish officials, the militants crossed the border into Turkey from Raqqa, Syria, on May 25, 2016, and rented an apartment in the Faith district of Istanbul to prepare for the attack. The explosives used in the attack were a military-grade manufactured combination of Research

Turkey: Extremism and Terrorism

Department eXplosive (RDX), trinitrotoluene (TNT), and pentaerythritol tetranitrate (PETN). (Sources: [Fox News](#), [BBC News](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), [CNN](#), [USA Today](#), [Associated Press](#))

The June 28 attacks came after several deadly car bomb, suicide bomb, and improvised explosive device (IED) attacks in Turkey earlier in June, including a suicide car bomb attack targeting a police bus in Istanbul. (Sources: [BBC News](#), [Reuters](#), [Associated Press](#))

May 2016 PKK Bombings in Southeast Turkey

In May 2016, the PKK allegedly carried out a string of small-scale bombings in Turkey's southeast. Car bomb attacks in Diyarbakir province on May 1 and May 10 killed one Turkish soldier and three people, respectively. The Turkish government held the PKK responsible for both attacks. On May 24, the Turkish government blamed the PKK for a roadside bomb attack in Van province that killed six Turkish soldiers. On May 30, two purported PKK roadside bomb attacks in Sirnak and Van provinces killed six people, including four civilians and two police officers. The May 30 attacks occurred hours after Turkish warplanes bombed PKK positions in northern Iraq. (Sources: [Hurriyet Daily News](#), [Associated Press](#), [Al Arabiya](#), [Reuters](#))

January 12, 2016, ISIS Bombing in Istanbul

Ten people were killed by an ISIS suicide bomb attack in the central district of Sultanahmet in Istanbul on January 12, 2016. Eight of the victims were German tourists. The bomb also injured 15, including a Norwegian man. (Sources: [BBC News](#), [Guardian](#))

According to the Turkish deputy prime minister, the suicide bomber was a person "of Syrian origin" born in 1988. Turkish officials later identified the bomber as Nabil Fadli and reported that he had entered Turkey posing as a Syrian refugee on January 5, 2016, though he raised no red flags at the time. According to Syrian opposition activist Adnan Alhussen, Fadli had belonged to a Syrian jihadist group that joined ISIS in 2014. Fadli was reportedly born in Saudi Arabia, but left the country with his family at the age of 8. He grew up in Syria in the northern town of Manbij. (Sources: [BBC News](#), [Wall Street Journal](#))

Following the attack, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said Turkey was "the top target for all terrorist groups in the region." (Sources: [BBC News](#), [Guardian](#))

October 10, 2015, ISIS Bombing in Ankara

In the deadliest attack in modern Turkish history, two suicide bombers attacked a peace rally outside of Ankara's Central railway station, killing 102 people and wounding more than 400. The perpetrators—reportedly linked to ISIS—were equipped with TNT and metal balls to maximize casualties. One of the perpetrators was identified as Yunus Emre Alagöz, the brother of a suicide bomber responsible for the July 2015 ISIS attack in Suruç. (Sources: [Guardian](#), [Anadolu Agency](#), [Economist](#))

The Turkish government named ISIS as the main suspect in the bombings, but no group claimed responsibility. In response to the attack, Turkish authorities carried out raids in southeastern Gaziantep, seizing the vehicle used for the bombing, 2,500 kilograms of ammonium nitrate, 10 suicide vests, explosive materials, rifles, bullets, hand grenades, and numerous detonators. (Sources: [Guardian](#), [Hurriyet Daily News](#))

Among the participants at the Ankara peace rally were members of Turkey's pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP). The rally was held to protest the conflict between the PKK and the Turkish government. Both major ISIS attacks in Turkey in 2015 targeted Kurds. (Sources: [Economist](#), [Hurriyet Daily News](#), [CNN](#))

July 20, 2015, ISIS Bombing in Suruç

On July 20, 2015, an ISIS suicide bomber killed 32 leftist activists in the southern town of Suruç, close to the Syrian border. The bombing occurred at the Amara Culture Center, where pro-Kurdish activists were speaking to the press about their plan to travel across the Syrian border to "rebuild" Kobani, the Kurdish town where PKK and YPG militants have battled ISIS. A video released on social media showed the students shouting, "We defended it together, we are building it together," followed by a large explosion. (Sources: [BBC News](#), [Guardian](#))

Turkey: Extremism and Terrorism

The Turkish government immediately blamed ISIS for the attack, and the terror group later claimed responsibility. The perpetrator was identified as ?eyh Abdurrahman Alagöz, a Turkish Kurd with ties to ISIS. He was from Turkey’s Adiyaman province—Dokumacilar’s recruiting grounds—and had reportedly traveled to Syria earlier in 2015 with his brother Yunus Emre Alagöz, implicated in the October 2015 attacks. (Sources: [T24](#), [Euronews](#), [Telegraph](#), [Telegraph](#), [BBC News](#))

November 13, 2022, Bombing in Central Istanbul

On November 13, 2022, a bomb detonated on a busy pedestrian road in central Istanbul. The explosion—the deadliest in Turkey in over five years—killed six people and injured at least 81 others. In the days following the attack, police detained 50 people including Ahlam Albashir, a Syrian woman suspected of planting the bomb. Additional suspects in custody included brothers Ammar J. and Ahmed J., who were allegedly tasked with transporting Albashir to Greece after the attack and driving another suspect to the border with Bulgaria. Turkish authorities claimed the woman was sent to Turkey from Syria by Kurdish militants belonging to the YPG militia—a wing of the proscribed Kurdistan Workers’ Party, or PKK. Interior Minister Suleyman Soylu later accused the United States of complicity in the attack given America’s military affiliation with the Syrian Democratic Forces—the Kurdish-led forces in Syria battling ISIS. The PKK denied any involvement in the explosion. Upon her interrogation, Albashir confesses to planting the bomb, and that she joined the PKK under the influence of her ex-boyfriend. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [CNN](#), [Reuters](#), [Associated Press](#), [Al Arabiya](#))

In retaliation of the Istanbul bombing, on November 20, 2022, Turkey launched airstrikes over northern regions of Syria and Iraq targeting the bases of the PKK and YPG. According to the Defense Ministry, the strikes—which ranged from Tall Rifat, northwest Syria to the Qandil mountains, northeast Iraq—destroyed 89 targets and killed a “large number” of “terrorists”. (Sources: [Washington Post](#))

- **October 2, 2023:** Turkish intelligence carry out an operation in Qamishli district, northern Syria, where they “neutralize” Muzdelif Taskin, a PKK officer accused of masterminding a 2007 attack that killed 12 Turkish troops in Hakkari, southeastern Turkey. Taskin’s tenure with the PKK reportedly spanned 35 years, during which he organized and participated in numerous attacks. Source: [Anadolu Agency](#)
- **October 1, 2023:** A suicide bomber detonates an explosive outside of Turkey’s Interior Ministry building in Ankara. The explosion kills one and injures at least two others. Another attacker was “neutralized” at the scene. The assailants, who were members of the PKK, drove to the building’s entrance where they were equipped with different types of guns, hand grenades, a rocket launcher, and explosives. The Turkish military responded to the attack by later destroying 20 PKK warehouses and hideouts in northern Iraq. A few days later, Turkey’s Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan announced that all facilities and infrastructure belonging to the PKK and its Syrian offshoot the People’s Protection Units (YPG) are now “legitimate targets” of Turkey’s security forces and intelligence units. Sources: [CNN](#), [Reuters](#)
- **September 11, 2023:** A court in Diyarbakir sentences Narin Gezgör, a founding member of a Kurdish women’s rights group to seven years and six months in prison on charges of membership in a terrorist organization. Critics have claimed that politically active Kurds are accused of membership in a terrorist group although engaging in non-violent civil society engagement and political commentary. Source: [Stockholm Center for Freedom](#)
- **August 10, 2023:** Under the cross-border operation Claw-Lock, Turkish troops clash with PKK fighters in Zap, northern Iraq. The combat kills six soldiers. Source: [Al Jazeera](#)
- **August 5, 2023:** PKK members attempt to plant explosives in a shopping mall and urban forest in Istanbul. After investigating a bag that suddenly caught fire at the mall, police detain two members who claim they were in contact with a foreign person who sent them money for preparing explosives which were later assembled by other PKK members. The police detain a total of 11 members, of which police determine, were also responsible for leaving devices in Sultangazi Urban Forest with the intention of starting a wildfire. Source: [Hurriyet Daily News](#)
- **August 3, 2023:** ISIS releases an audio statement in which the group’s spokesman confirms the death of ISIS leader, Abu al-Hussain al-Hussaini al-Qurashi. According to the statement, Abu al-Hussain was killed in clashes with HTS. ISIS’s statement differs from Turkey’s April 2023 claim Abu al-Hussain had been killed in a Turkish intelligence operation in northern Syria. In the ISIS’s statement, the terror group also announced the appointment of Abu Hafis al-Hashimi al-Qurayshi as ISIS’s new leader. Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#), [Defense Post](#)
- **July 13, 2023:** Turkey’s extradition requests for two men wanted in the country is rejected by the Swedish Supreme Court. According to Turkey, the men demonstrated support of the Muslim cleric Fethullah Gulen “by downloading and using a mobile application, which is used by the movement’s members.” Listed as a terror organization by Turkey, Gulen’s network has been blamed for the failed 2016 coup of the Turkish government. However, the Swedish Supreme Court states that downloading and using mobile applications is not an act of participation in a terror group. Source: [Al Jazeera](#)
- **July 10, 2023:** Turkish security forces carry out an operation in Zap region, killing Ferit Yüksel, a PKK leader who oversaw the group’s regional communications. Source: [Daily Sabah](#)
- **July 9, 2023:** Suspected PKK militants ambush Turkish soldiers in Zap region. Two soldiers are killed. Source: [Daily Sabah](#)

Turkey: Extremism and Terrorism

- **July 6, 2023:** A Stockholm district court finds a Kurdish man of Turkish origin guilty of attempted aggravated extortion and a firearms offense. The man, who was originally arrested in January for threatening and firing a gun outside a Stockholm restaurant to extort a businessman to pay more money to the PKK, is sentenced to four and a half years imprisonment. The action was reportedly part of an extensive fundraising program conducted by the PKK in Europe. Source: [France 24](#)
- **May 22, 2023:** Istanbul police launch operations targeting the PKK in the southern provinces of Mersin and Antalya. The raids are carried out after a group called “children of fire” posts across social media that they would “create chaos and fear.” The group members were allegedly responsible for arson related attacks and illegal demonstrations across the country. At least 23 people are detained during the operations. Source: [Hurriyet Daily News](#)
- **May 18, 2023:** Turkey’s National Intelligence Organization (MIT) launches an operation in Ayn al-Arab, northern Syria. The operation leads to the death of Tuba Karakoç, a PKK/YPG finance leader. Karakoç reportedly joined the PKK in 2013, and her violent and financial activities with the group extended across Turkey, Iraq, and Syria. Prior to her death, she was suspected of preparing another attack in Turkey. Source: [Hurriyet Daily News](#)
- **May 2, 2023:** Turkey and the U.S. Department of the Treasury designate Omar Alsheak and Kubilay Sari, two financial facilitators belonging to the internationally designated and Syria-based terror groups Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) and Katibat al-Tawhid wal-Jihad (KTJ). Alsheak has served in multiple senior HTS roles since at least 2003, and Istanbul-based Sari serves as a financial conduit for multiple members of KTJ and HTS in the purchase of weapons systems. Source: [U.S. Department of the Treasury](#)
- **April 29, 2023:** Turkey’s MIT intelligence agency carries out an operation in Syria’s Afrin province. After surrounding a house harboring ISIS leader Abu al-Hussain al-Hussaini al-Qurashi, the leader of the terrorist organization detonates a suicide vest to avoid detention. Erdoğan confirms the death of Abu al-Hussain the next day. Sources: [CBS News](#), [Agence France Presse](#)
- **February 22, 2023:** The U.S. Supreme Court hears arguments for a lawsuit attempting to hold social media companies responsible for a 2017 terrorist attack at an Istanbul nightclub. The attack killed 39 people, with one of the victim’s relatives telling the court that tech companies aided and abetted the growth of ISIS. A ruling is expected by the end of June. Source: [Associated Press](#)
- **February 4, 2023:** Turkish intelligence breaks up a 15-member ISIS cell planning attacks on the Swedish and Dutch embassies in Istanbul, as well as synagogues and churches in Istanbul, though authorities say they found no evidence of concrete plans for an imminent attack. The alleged cell was reportedly planning the attacks in retaliation for far-right Quran burnings in Sweden and the Netherlands. Authorities link the cell to ISIS’s Khorasan Province in Afghanistan. Sources: [I24 News](#), [U.S. Embassy and Consulates in Türkiye](#), [Associated Press](#), [Jewish Telegraphic Agency](#)
- **January 27, 2023 - February 2, 2023:** In response to far-right Quran burnings in Sweden, Denmark, and the Netherlands in January, on January 27 the diplomatic missions of the United States, Sweden, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom issue warnings of increased attacks on their nationals in Turkey. The diplomatic missions also temporarily close. On January 28, Turkey issues a warning to its citizens of “possible Islamophobic, xenophobic and racist attacks” in the United States and Europe. On January 30, the United States issues a new warning of “possible imminent retaliatory attacks by terrorists against churches, synagogues, and diplomatic missions in Istanbul or other places Westerners frequent” in retaliation for the Quran burnings. On February 2, the Turkish government summons the diplomatic representatives of the nine countries to criticize the moves. The Quran burning began January 20 in Sweden near the Turkish embassy as part of protests against Turkey’s decision to block Sweden bid to join NATO. Similar burnings spread to other European countries. Sources: [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [U.S. Embassy and Consulates in Türkiye](#), [Reuters](#)
- **January 11, 2023:** An Istanbul court convicts Dr. Sebnem Korur Fincanci of disseminating “terror organization propaganda” and sentences her to three years in prison. The court agrees to release Fincanci from pre-trial detention while she files her appeal. Fincanci is president of the Turkish Medical Association. She was arrested in October 2022 after a media interview in which she called for an independent investigation of allegations the Turkish military employed chemical weapons against Kurdish militants in Iraq. Fincanci denied the charge she engaged in PKK propaganda, arguing she gave a professional opinion. Human rights groups condemned Fincanci’s trial as an attempt to silence government critics. Source: [Associated Press](#)
- **November 21, 2022:** Suspected Kurdish militants in Syria launch five rockets toward the Turkish town of Karkamis, killing two and wounding 10. One of the rockets strikes a school. The attack followed Turkish airstrikes on YPG positions in Syria that killed 31. Source: [Al Jazeera](#)
- **November 13, 2022:** A bomb detonates on a busy pedestrian road in central Istanbul. The explosion—the deadliest in Turkey in over five years—kills six people and injures at least 81 others. In the days following the attack, police detain 50 people including Ahlam Albashir, a Syrian woman who authorities claim was sent to Turkey from Syria by Kurdish militants belonging to the YPG militia—a wing of the PKK. Interior Minister Suleyman Soyulu later accuses the United States of complicity in the attack given America’s military affiliation with the Syrian Democratic Forces. The PKK denies any involvement in the explosion. Upon her interrogation, Albashir confesses to planting the bomb, and that she joined the PKK under the influence of her ex-boyfriend. Sources: [New York Times](#), [CNN](#), [Reuters](#), [Associated Press](#), [Al Arabiya](#)
- **October 26, 2022:** Turkish security forces arrest Sebnem Korur Fincanci, the head of Turkey’s medical association, on suspicion of spreading terrorist propaganda and insulting Turkey. Fincanci, a well-known human rights activist, reportedly called for an investigation into claims that the army used chemical weapons against Kurdish militants. A week prior to Fincanci’s arrest, the PKK released a video showing Turkish troops releasing a substance into a cave, which reportedly led to the death of 17 of its members. Erdoğan accuses Fincanci and the Turkish medical association of speaking the language of the PKK and claims he will take measures against both. Source: [BBC News](#)

Turkey: Extremism and Terrorism

- **September 26, 2022:** Suspected PKK assailants carry out an attack on a police guesthouse in Mersin province, southern Turkey. In the attack, two female attackers opened fire and detonated bombs, killing one policeman and injuring another. Turkish authorities later detain 22 people in connection to the incident. Source: [Arab News](#)
- **July 20, 2022:** A strike targets a mountain resort in the Kurdish region of Dohuk Governorate, Iraq. The strike kills nine and wounds more than 20 others. According to Iraqi state media, Turkish forces were responsible for the shelling, but the Turkish government claims the PKK was behind the strike. Turkish forces are deployed in military activity in the area to counter attacks from the PKK as well as the Syrian Kurdish YPG militia. Sources: [United Nations](#), [Defense Post](#)
- - : Israeli and Turkish security agencies reportedly foil Iranian attempts to kidnap Israelis in Turkey in May. On May 30, Israel issues a travel advisory to its citizens to avoid Turkey because of Iranian threats of revenge for the assassination of an Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) colonel in Tehran, for which Iran blamed Israel. Israel's National Security Council says Tehran could be looking to harm Israelis in Turkey and classifies it as a "high-risk country." On June 13, Turkish media report Turkish security agents detain agents from the IRGC. That same day, Israel's foreign ministry raises its Istanbul travel advisory to its highest level and warns Israelis to avoid the city or return home if already there. Warning of intelligence of an Iranian plot to kidnap or kill Israelis in Turkey, Israel calls on its citizens to avoid the country altogether unless they have a vital reason to go. Sources: [Jerusalem Post](#), [Reuters](#), [Al Jazeera](#), [Reuters](#)
- **May 26, 2022:** Media sources report that Turkish anti-terrorism police and intelligence agents recently conducted a raid in Istanbul that reportedly results in the capture of Abu Hasan al-Hashimi al-Qurashi, the current leader of ISIS. The operation is reportedly conducted following a lengthy police surveillance of a house in which al-Qurashi was allegedly staying in. Confirmation of the capture has yet to be reported. (Sources: [Bloomberg News](#), [Daily Mail](#))
- **May 25, 2022:** PKK militants engage in fighting with Turkish soldiers in northern Iraq. The fighting kills five Turkish soldiers and wounds two others. Source: [Defense Post](#)
- **April 20, 2022:** An explosive detonates in Bursa, northwestern Turkey, striking a bus carrying prison guards. The explosion kills one and injures four others. No group claims responsibility for the attack. (Source: [Daily Sabah](#))
- **February 11, 2021:** Citing enhanced cooperation with Turkey's MIT, Israeli media report Israel's Mossad intelligence agency had helped foil at least 12 terrorist plots against Israelis in Turkey within the past two years. The majority of the plots were reportedly planned by ISIS. Source: [Times of Israel](#)
- **February 11, 2022:** Turkish media report Turkey's National Intelligence Organization (MIT) had in recent days arrested eight Iranian spies suspected of plotting to assassinate Israeli-Turkish businessman Yair Geller in the fall of 2021. Geller lives in Istanbul and owns an engineering company specializing in aerospace technology. The assassination attempt was allegedly in retaliation for the 2020 killing of Iranian nuclear chief Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, which Iran blamed on Israel's Mossad spy agency. Iranian Moshtagh Bighouz is identified as the leader of the eight-member cell in Istanbul. The cell's leader in Iran is identified as Iranian intelligence officer Yasin Taheremamkendi. Sources: [Times of Israel](#), [Middle East Eye](#)
- **February 11, 2022:** Turkish authorities arrest 22 ISIS suspects in Istanbul. The suspects are accused of providing financial assistance to ISIS by collecting money as sacrificial donations. Source: [Anadolu Agency](#)
- **October 28, 2020:** A bombing in Mardin province temporarily disables an oil pipeline running from Iraq to Turkey. The PKK claims responsibility. Source: [U.S. Department of State](#)
- **October 26, 2020:** Security forces confront two suspected PKK militants in the town of Iskenderun in the Hatay province, killing one. The other blows himself up, wounding a Turkish soldier. There are no fatalities reported. The incident came days after an alert from the U.S. Embassy in Ankara about possible attacks on U.S. citizens and foreigners in Turkey. Sources: [Agence France-Presse](#), [Associated Press](#)
- **June 23, 2020:** A suicide bomber dressed as a potential recruit explodes outside of Camp Turksom, Turkey's largest overseas military base, in Mogadishu, Somalia, killing two civilians. Al-Shabaab claims responsibility. It is the group's first attack on the base. Sources: [New York Times](#), [Al Jazeera](#)
- **April 15, 2020:** Turkey launches airstrikes in northern Iraq, seeking to target members of the PKK. The drone strikes the Makhmour refugee camp—which the Turkish government claims as a hotbed of the PKK—killing two refugee women in the process. According to Iraq's Foreign Affairs Ministry, the strikes were a violation of Iraq's sovereignty. Source: [New York Times](#)
- **April 15, 2020:** An explosive planted by the PKK detonates in northern Iraq. The attack kills one Turkish soldier. Source: [Hurriyet Daily News](#)
- **April 13, 2020:** Turkish security forces prevent Syrian "terrorists" from entering Mardin state, southeastern Turkey. According to intelligence gathered from Turkey's National Intelligence Organization (MIT), the suspects allegedly sought to carry out a bombing in Turkey. The suspects manage to escape and leave behind explosives and detonators. Source: [Asharq Al-Awsat](#)
- **April 8, 2020:** A car strikes a bomb that is allegedly planted by the PKK in Diyarbakir province, Turkey. The attack kills five. Source: [Middle East Eye](#)
- **April 1, 2020:** A PKK suicide bomber detonates an explosive next to a pipeline in Agri province near the Iran-Turkey border. According to a statement released by the PKK, over 30 Turkish soldiers were killed. Source: [Rudaw](#)
- **March 30, 2020:** A suicide bomber explodes at a natural gas pipeline near the Turkish-Iranian border. There are no reported casualties, but the pipeline is offline for months. A PKK affiliate claims responsibility. Source: [U.S. Department of State](#)
- **March 26, 2020:** PKK militants launch a mortar attack on Turkish troops in an undisclosed area in northern Iraq. The attack kills two Turkish soldiers and wounds two others. Source: [Al Jazeera](#)
- **March 11, 2020:** Turkish security forces launched the "Kapan-7 Garisa" counterterrorism operation in the country's eastern Siirt province. The operation, which deployed almost 500 personnel, specifically targets undermining the PKK. Currently, the PKK has a relatively strong presence and a number of bases in Turkey's eastern and southeastern provinces where the operation will largely be concentrated. Source: [Daily](#)

Turkey: Extremism and Terrorism

Sabah

- **March 5, 2020:** The interior ministry announces the commencement of Operation Kapan-3 against the PKK terrorist group in Kazan Valley—a territorial addition to the Operation’s original focus in Hakkari province which was initiated on January 13, 2020. The operation aims to identify areas used as shelters by the PKK and by rendering those shelters and warehouses unusable. Also that day, Turkish police intercept a truck driver in Istanbul that was transporting explosives into al-Bab in northwestern Syria. The police arrest the truck driver and the owners of the transportation company. It is assumed that the aim of the suspects was to bring raw material to al-Bab to produce explosives. It is uncertain if the suspects were affiliated with any terrorist group. Sources: [Daily Sabah](#), [Daily Sabah](#)
- **February 28, 2020:** A rocket attack on the Gurbulak customs gate with Iran kills two Turkish Customs officials. The PKK claims responsibility. Source: [U.S. Department of State](#)
- **February 18, 2020:** Turkish anti-terrorism and intelligence units arrest three ISIS militants in Bursa. One of the suspects is believed to be an intelligence operative for the group. Also that day, Hakkari local police arrest 23 suspects with alleged ties to the PKK. The suspects allegedly either campaigned for PKK on social media, were members of the group, or tried to aid the terrorists in some capacity. Sources: [Anadolu Agency](#), [Anadolu Agency](#)
- **January 29, 2020:** Anti-terror police carry out raids in Ankara, and arrest 10 suspects linked to ISIS. The suspects were in contact with militants in conflict zones and were allegedly plotting terrorist attacks. Sources: [Anadolu Agency](#), [Hurriyet Daily News](#)
- **January 7, 2020:** Turkish security forces deport seven Iraqis and one U.S. citizen back to their respective countries due to their links to ISIS. The suspects were arrested following an anti-terror operation on December 31, 2019 in the Black Sea province of Samsun. Source: [Hurriyet Daily News](#)
- **January 6, 2020:** Border forces in Erdine province, which borders Greece and Bulgaria, arrest three suspects with alleged ties to the PKK. The suspects sought to cross into Greece via Turkey. Source: [Anadolu Agency](#)
- **December 30, 2019:** The Turkish police announces that they are holding 147 suspects across the country with alleged ties to ISIS. In Ankara alone, over 50 foreign nationals suspected of connections to terrorist organization abroad. Source: [Anadolu Agency](#)
- **December 23, 2019 - December 25, 2019:** On December 23, Gendarmerie forces launch a narco-terror operation in conjunction with Operation Kiran-11 Narco-Terror to neutralize the PKK’s presence in the region as well as eliminate the terror group’s financial resources. On December 25, Turkish forces destroy 19 caves used by the PKK to store bomb-making materials in Diyarbakir province, southeast Turkey. Source: [Anadolu Agency](#)
- **September 25, 2019:** An improvised explosive device detonates in Yuregir district, southeastern Turkey. The explosion, which targeted a bus carrying police personnel, injures a police official and four bystanders. No group claims responsibility for the attack, but the government blames the Marxist-Leninist Communist Party. Sources: [Anadolu Agency](#), [U.S. Department of State](#)
- **September 12, 2019:** Security forces in Mardin province arrest two PKK members allegedly sent to Turkey to carry out bomb attacks in cities and start forest fires across the country. A Turkish court remanded the suspects, who were said to have been trained in Syria by the Civil Protection Units (YPS), an affiliate of the PKK. In a written statement on a pro-PKK website, YPS, calling itself “the Children of the Fire Initiative,” took responsibility for starting 27 separate forest fires in western Turkish cities, between July 11 and August 24, including the one in western Izmir province, which affected more than 500 hectares of forest in the Karabağlar, Menderes, and Seferihisar districts. In Diyarbakir province’s Kulp district, a roadside bomb strikes a bus carrying workers from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, killing seven and wounding 13. The government blames the PKK. Sources: [Daily Sabah](#), [U.S. Department of State](#)
- **July 17, 2019 - July 20, 2019:** Three gunman attack and flee a restaurant in Erbil, a Kurdish-controlled region of Iraq. Three people are killed, including one Turkish diplomat and two Iraqis. It was not immediately clear who carried out the shooting or why. Source: [New York Times](#)
- **July 5, 2019:** A vehicle strikes a roadside bomb in Reyhanli, killing the two passengers and a passerby. All three victims are reportedly Syrian citizens. Source: [U.S. Department of State](#)
- **March 26, 2019:** A Turkish employee of the U.S. consulate in Istanbul stands trial on charges of espionage, terrorism, and playing a role in an attempted overthrow of the government. Metin Topuz is facing life in prison if convicted for ties to the outlawed network of Fethullah Gulen, a U.S.-based cleric who is accused by the Turkish government of masterminding the failed coup attempt in 2016. Topuz denied the accusations. Topuz’s arrest had sparked a diplomatic spat with the United States, prompting Washington to temporarily suspend visa services in Turkey. At the time, Topuz testified that he traveled to the U.S. with members of Turkey’s police, who were involved in a 2013 corruption probe that was allegedly backed by Gulen’s network against Erdoğan’s government. Source: [Bloomberg](#)
- **March 18, 2019:** A Turkish-born man, Gokmen Tanis, boards a tram in Utrecht, the Netherlands, and subsequently goes on a shooting rampage. The attack kills three people and wounds five others. Police later arrest Tanis and claim the shooting appeared to be a terrorist incident, but could also have been motivated by “family reasons.” Sources: [Telegraph](#), [BBC News](#)
- **March 15, 2019:** A Turkish court convicts an Australian-born ISIS militant of belonging to a terror group and sentences him to more than seven years in prison. Neil Prakash, has been in a Turkish prison since 2016 when he was arrested near the Syrian border for attempting to cross into Turkey with fake documents. Turkish prosecutors said the 27-year-old had illegally crossed into Syria in 2013 where he joined ISIS. He was featured in ISIS videos, been linked to several attack plans in Australia and has urged lone wolf attacks against the United States. Source: [Associated Press](#)

Turkey: Extremism and Terrorism

- **February 6, 2019:** The Trump administration escalates its dispute with Germany over the transfer of a terror suspect sought by the United States.
Senior U.S. and German officials had a heated argument over the fate of Adem Yilmaz, a Turkish man convicted of belonging to a terrorist cell, after he was deported to Turkey despite a U.S. extradition request. Yilmaz was convicted in 2010 of plotting to bomb American targets in Germany and sentenced to 11 years in prison. U.S. officials had filed an extradition request for Yilmaz over the killing of two American service members, but a German court allowed him to be deported to Turkey instead. Source: [Bloomberg](#)
- **November 14, 2018:** A Turkish court sentences singer and German citizen, Saide Inac, to six years and three months in jail for membership of an armed terrorist organization.
An image of Inac alongside a senior member of the outlawed PKK had circulated on Turkish media, following her detention. Inac had denied being a member or a sympathizer of an illegal organization and had requested her acquittal. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **November 11, 2018:** A handmade explosive device, suspected to be planted by the PKK, detonates in a rural area of Gormec in the Gabar Mountain region.
The attack kills two Turkish soldiers and injures five others. Source: [Daily Sabah](#)
- **October 26, 2018:** A Turkish court sentences a German man, only identified as Patrick K., to six years and three months in prison for membership in a terrorist organization.
Turkish authorities arrested the defendant while he was on a hike on March 14, 2018 near the Turkish-Syrian border and claim to have found an email that Patrick K. sent to the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), the armed faction of the Democratic Union Party (PYD), offering to fight for the group. The case was based on the testimony of Patrick K.'s cellmate, who allegedly recognized the German man. The witness claimed to have seen Patrick K. in a YPG uniform working as a doctor at a hospital in Syria in January 2018. There was no evidence in the indictment, however, that shows that Patrick K. traveled to Syria. Source: [Deutsche Welle](#)
- **October 12, 2018:** A Turkish court in Aliaga frees American pastor, Andrew Brunson, after he spent nearly two years in jail on charges related to terrorism and espionage.
Turkey's government faced threats of further U.S. sanctions over its treatment of the pastor, who denies all charges against him, but Erdoğan insisted that the Turkish judicial system be allowed to function. Prosecutors accused Brunson of committing crimes on behalf of terror groups, linking him to outlawed Kurdish militants and a network led by a U.S.-based Turkish cleric who is accused of orchestrating the coup attempt. The U.S. maintained that he was being held unjustly and repeatedly called for his release. Source: [CBS News](#)
- **October 9, 2018:** Turkish police detain 90 people over suspected links to PKK rebels.
The arrests come days after Erdoğan warned he would replace any mayors elected in next year's local elections if they were deemed to have links to terrorism. Erdoğan accuses the main pro-Kurdish party, the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), of links to the PKK. The HDP denies this and says it is unjustly targeted by the government. One prominent HDP lawmaker, Garo Paylan, said the arrests were politically motivated, and were part of the governing party AKP's campaign strategy for the 2019 election. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **October 4, 2018:** A roadside bomb kills at least seven Turkish soldiers and wounds three others in the Batman province.
Turkish officials blame the PKK and promise revenge against the group. Sources: [Middle East Eye](#), [Reuters](#)
- **August 20, 2018:** Several shots are fired at the U.S. embassy in Ankara but no casualties are reported.
The Turkish government calls the attack an attempt to spread chaos. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **July 31, 2018:** A roadside IED in the Hakkari province kills a woman and her 11-month-old son.
Authorities suspect the PKK. Source: [Times of India](#)
- **June 19, 2018 - June 20, 2018:** On June 19, a roadside bomb in the Siirte province kills one soldier and wounds two others.
On June 20, militants fire a rocket at a passing military convoy coming from a military command in the Çukurca district bordering northern Iraq. The attack kills two soldiers and wounds one other. Security sources blame the PKK for both attacks. Source: [Hurriyet Daily News](#)
- **June 4, 2018:** Militants attack a group of members of the ruling AKP in the Sanliurfa province, killing four and wounding eight.
There are no immediate claims of responsibility but the government blames the PKK. Source: [Anadolu Agency](#)
- **February 1, 2018:** Militants attack Turkish positions in the Hakkari province and in northern Iraq, killing three and wounding seven.
The Turkish military blames the PKK. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **November 2, 2017:** Militants from northern Iraq clash with Turkish soldiers while trying to cross into Turkey's Hakkari province.
At least eight are killed, including six Turkish soldiers and two village guards from Hakkari. The Turkish military blames the PKK. Source: [Daily Sabah](#)
- **August 1, 2017:** A Turkish military vehicle in Diyarbakir province is hit with an improvised explosive device, killing two soldiers.
Security sources blame the PKK. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **July 30, 2017:** A gunman attacks the Çilek Beach Club and the Sess Beach Club in the resort town of Bodrum along the Aegean Sea, killing one and wounding four.
There are no immediate claims of responsibility. Sources: [Hurriyet Daily News](#), [BBC News](#)
- **July 17, 2017:** Kurdish militants detonate an improvised explosive device as a military vehicle passes by in the Hakkari province, wounding 17 soldiers.
The Turkish government blames the PKK. Source: [Voice of America](#)
- **July 8, 2017:** The PKK attacks a construction convoy in the Hakkari province, killing four and wounding two.
Source: [U.S. Department of State](#)
- **April 11, 2017:** An explosion at a police station in the largely Kurdish city of Diyarbakir kills three people and wounds four.
According to Turkish Interior Minister Suleyman Soyulu, militants had dug tunnels beneath the station and placed explosives beneath the facility, which is used to repair police vehicles. One armored police vehicle under repair was damaged in the attack. The PKK claims responsibility,

Turkey: Extremism and Terrorism

alleging it had planted 2.5 tonnes of explosives. Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Reuters](#)

- **March 29, 2017:** A bomb explodes in a parked car early in the morning in the Çamlı?kule neighborhood of the Buca district, killing the militant in the car and wounding another nearby.
When an ambulance arrives, a second bomb explodes in a nearby garbage can. Police blame the PKK. Source: [Hurriyet Daily News](#)
- **March 15, 2017:** A mine explodes beneath an army vehicle on a highway linking Diyarbakir and Mardin, killing at least two soldiers. The military blames the PKK. Source: [Al Jazeera](#)
- **February 17, 2017:** A remotely detonated car bomb outside a judicial housing building in Viransehir near the Turkish border kills a 11-year-old child and wounds 17 people.
There are no immediate claims of responsibility but officials suspect the PKK. Sources: [BBC News](#), [Reuters](#)
- **February 9, 2017:** In a massive raid, Turkish authorities seize 150 kilos of explosives and arrest four suspected ISIS militants in Gaziantep, near the Syrian border.
According to authorities, the suspects were plotting a major terrorist attack inside Turkey. Source: [Voice of America](#)
- **January 20, 2017:** Militants fire RPGs at the Istanbul police directorate and the Justice and Development party's provincial office. There are no casualties reported. The Revolutionary People's Liberation Front claims responsibility. Source: [U.S. Department of State](#)
- **January 6, 2017:** A roadside bomb in the Diyarbakir province kills at least four police officers and wounds two.
There is no immediate claim of responsibility. Source: [Al Jazeera](#)
- **January 5, 2017:** Three militants clash with police and detonate a car bomb outside of a courthouse in Turkey's Aegean coastal city of Izmir, killing a police officer and a court employee.
According to Deputy Prime Minister Veysi Kaynak, it appears that a much larger attack was being planned based on the weapons found at the scene. The TAK claim responsibility. Sources: [BBC News](#), [Reuters](#), [Associated Press](#)
- **January 1, 2017:** At approximately 1 a.m., Uzbek national Abdulkadir Masharipov, a.k.a. Ebu Muhammed Horasani, opens fire at Istanbul's Reina nightclub filled with New Year's revelers.
The attack leaves 39 dead and dozens more wounded. ISIS claims responsibility the following day, characterizing the gunman as a "soldier of the caliphate." Turkish authorities arrest Masharipov after a two-week-long manhunt. Sources: [New York Times](#), [Reuters](#), [Hurriyet Daily News](#), [Reuters](#)
- **December 19, 2016:** A gunman opens fire at the Contemporary Arts Center in Ankara, killing Russian Ambassador to Turkey Andrei Karlov. The assailant is identified as off-duty Turkish police officer Mevlüt Mert Altinta?. According to news reports, Altinta? shouted, "Don't forget about Aleppo, don't forget about Syria." There is no immediate claim of responsibility. Source: [BBC News](#)
- **December 17, 2016:** A suicide car bomb explodes next to a bus carrying off-duty soldiers outside of the entrance to Erciyes University in the central Turkish city of Kayseri.
The attack kills 14 soldiers and wounds 55 people. There is no immediate claim of responsibility, but Turkish officials suspect the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Sources: [CBS News](#), [Anadolu Agency](#)
- **December 12, 2016:** Turkish authorities arrest 235 people in anti-terror operations across Turkey.
According to the Turkish interior ministry, the suspects allegedly have links to the PKK and are accused of spreading terrorist propaganda on social media. Sources: [Anadolu Agency](#), [ABC News](#)
- **December 10, 2016:** Two bombs explode outside of a soccer stadium in Istanbul, killing 44 people and wounding 155 others.
A car bomb detonates near the stadium's main entrance, hitting a police vehicle, and a suicide bomber explodes in a nearby park while surrounded by police. The TAK claims responsibility for the attack. Sources: [BBC News](#), [CNN](#), [BBC News](#), [Telegraph](#), [Associated Press](#), [CNN](#)
- **October 23, 2016:** PKK militants detonate a car bomb near a passing police vehicle in the eastern Turkish province of Bingol, killing two police officers and 19 people.
Source: [Reuters](#)
- **October 6, 2016:** A motorcycle bomb explodes near an Istanbul police station, wounding at least 10 people.
Turkish authorities believe the PKK to be responsible for the attack. Sources: [New York Times](#), [Associated Press](#)
- **September 12, 2016:** A car bomb explodes outside the Justice and Development Party's (AKP) headquarters in the eastern Turkish city of Van, wounding 48 people.
Turkish authorities blame the PKK for the attack. Source: [Independent](#)
- **September 9, 2016:** A car bomb explodes at a checkpoint outside of a police headquarters in the southeast city of Cizre, killing 11 policemen and wounding 78 others.
The PKK claims responsibility. Source: [BBC News](#)
- **August 20, 2016:** A suicide bomb blast during a Kurdish wedding reception in Turkey's southern city of Gaziantep kills 57 individuals and wounds more than 90 others.
Turkish authorities believe ISIS is responsible for the attack. Sources: [BBC News](#), [Hurriyet Daily News](#)
- **August 17, 2016 - August 18, 2016:** Three separate bomb attacks in eastern Turkey target security forces, killing 14 people and wounding more than 220 others.
The first car bomb explodes at a police station in the eastern province of Van on the evening of August 17. The next morning on August 18, another car bomb explodes at the police headquarters in the eastern city of Elazig. Later, in the southeastern province of Bitlis, attackers detonate a roadside improvised explosive device explodes as a Turkish military vehicle passes by. Turkish authorities believe the attacks were carried out by the PKK. Sources: [New York Times](#), [Fox News](#), [Independent](#)
- **August 9, 2016:** PKK militants reportedly open fire on Turkish soldiers outside the town of Kulp in the southeastern province of Diyarbakir, killing two soldiers and wounding two others.

Turkey: Extremism and Terrorism

Source: [Reuters](#)

- **July 18, 2016:** An unidentified gunman assassinates Istanbul’s deputy mayor, Cemil Candas. It is not clear if the incident is related to the failed military coup against President Erdoğan. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **July 15, 2016 - July 17, 2016:** A faction of the Turkish military attempts a coup in the Turkish capital of Ankara. The failed coup leaves 294 people dead and more than 1,400 people injured. President Erdoğan and his government quash the uprisings and reassert control by July 17, 2016, and detain more than 7,500 suspects in connection to the coup. Sources: [Los Angeles Times](#), [New York Times](#), [Wall Street Journal](#)
- **June 28, 2016:** Three suicide bombers open fire at Istanbul’s Ataturk airport before blowing themselves up, killing 45 people and wounding more than 230 others. Sources: [Reuters](#), [Telegraph](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), [Reuters](#)
- **June 23, 2016:** A purported PKK car bomber kills one civilian and wounds six military personnel in Turkey’s southeast province of Mardin. Source: [Associated Press](#)
- **June 14, 2016:** Six police officers are wounded from a roadside improvised explosive device (IED) in Van province. Turkish authorities believe PKK is responsible for the attack. Source: [Associated Press](#)
- **June 13, 2016:** A car bomb wounds nine people in Tunceli. No group claims responsibility. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **June 7, 2016:** A TAK suicide car bomber targets a police bus in Istanbul, killing seven officers, four civilians, and wounding 36 others. Sources: [BBC News](#), [Reuters](#)
- **May 30, 2016:** Two purported PKK roadside bomb attacks kill six people—including four civilians and two police officers—in Turkey’s Sırnak and Van provinces, respectively. The attacks occur hours after Turkish warplanes bomb PKK positions in northern Iraq. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **May 24, 2016:** An alleged PKK roadside bomb attack kills six Turkish soldiers in Turkey’s southeast Van province. Source: [Al Arabiya](#)
- **May 10, 2016:** A car bomb attack in Diyarbakir province kills three people. The Turkish government holds the PKK responsible. Source: [Associated Press](#)
- **May 1, 2016:** A car bomb attack kills one Turkish soldier in Diyarbakir province. The Turkish government blames the PKK. Source: [Hurriyet Daily News](#)
- **March 19, 2016:** An ISIS suicide bomber in central Istanbul kills three Israelis (two of whom hold dual U.S. citizenship) and one Iranian, wounding 36 others. Turkish authorities cancel a soccer match the following day due to the ongoing security threat. Source: [Reuters](#)
- **March 13, 2016:** A car bomb in central Ankara kills 37 and wounds over 125. The Turkish government blames the PKK and retaliates by striking PKK targets in northern Iraq. A PKK offshoot, the Kurdistan Freedom Falcons (TAK), claims responsibility in the days following the attack. Sources: [BBC News](#), [Reuters](#)
- **February 17, 2016:** A suicide car bombing in Ankara’s parliamentary district kills 29, at least 20 of whom are believed to be military personnel. The Turkish government immediately blames the YPG, and alleges that the Syrian-based militia was aided by the PKK. Turkish fighter planes bomb YPG and PKK bases within hours of the attack. Both the YPG and PKK deny involvement. The bomber was later named as Abdulkali Somer, a Turkish-born member of the PKK. Sources: [BBC News](#), [Reuters](#), [BBC News](#)
- **January 12, 2016:** Ten foreign nationals, including eight Germans, are killed in an ISIS suicide bombing in central Istanbul. Fifteen others are wounded. The bomber is identified as Saudi-born ISIS member Nabil Fadli who entered Turkey from Syria on January 5, 2016. Sources: [BBC News](#), [Wall Street Journal](#)
- **December 30, 2015:** Turkish authorities arrest two ISIS members suspected of planning to murder merrymakers in Ankara during New Year’s Eve festivities. Police confiscate a suicide vest, bomb-making equipment, and ball bearings. Source: [Wall Street Journal](#)
- **December 23, 2015:** Assaultants purportedly operating on behalf of PKK splinter group TAK carry out a mortar attack at Istanbul’s Sabiha Gokcen International Airport, killing one individual and wounding another. Source: [U.S. State Department](#)
- **December 1, 2015:** A pipe bomb intended to target policemen—explodes on an overpass near Istanbul’s Bayrampasa metro station. Five are injured. No group claims responsibility. Sources: [Al Jazeera](#), [Reuters](#)
- **October 30, 2015:** ISIS militants murder two Syrian activists in the southern Turkish town of Sanliurfa, slitting the throat of one and beheading the other. Source: [Huffington Post](#)
- **October 10, 2015:** In the deadliest attack in modern Turkish history, suspected ISIS suicide bombers kill 102 and wound more than 400 at a peace rally in Ankara. Rally attendees had been calling for reconciliation between the Turkish government and the PKK. After the attack, thousands of Turkish citizens demonstrate against President Erdoğan, blaming his government for a lack of security measures that they argue led to the attack. Sources: [CNN](#), [Guardian](#), [Hurriyet Daily News](#)
- **July 23, 2015:** ISIS militants open fire on Turkish border soldiers in Kilis, killing one noncommissioned officer. Turkey responds with “Operation Martyr Yalcin,” a series of airstrikes against ISIS positions in Northern Syria. Source: [U.S. State Department](#)

Turkey: Extremism and Terrorism

- **August 10, 2015:** Two assailants purportedly from the Revolutionary People’s Liberation Party/Front (DHKP/C) fire weapons at the U.S. consulate in Istanbul.
Source: [U.S. State Department](#)
- **July 20, 2015:** A suspected ISIS suicide bomber kills 32 leftwing activists in the small town of Suruç, close to the Syrian border. The activists had planned to travel to the Syrian Kurdish town of Kobani—which ISIS militants failed to wrest from Kurdish control in 2014—to plant a memorial forest, deliver toys, and build a library and playground. Sources: [Guardian](#), [NTV](#)
- **June 5, 2015:** A suspected ISIS assailant kills four civilians and wounds 100 more with two bombs blasts during an election rally for the People’s Democratic Party in Diyarbakir.
Source: [U.S. State Department](#)
- PKK militants wage at least six attacks on military installations and infrastructure, and carry out at least one kidnapping, in southeast Turkey.
Source: [Australian National Security](#)
- **January 6, 2015:** A female Russian citizen affiliated with ISIS detonates a suicide vest inside a police station in Istanbul’s Sultanahmet district, killing one police officer and injuring another.
Source: [U.S. State Department](#)
- **October 25, 2014:** Suspected PKK militants shoot dead three Turkish soldiers in southeast Turkey. Four days later, PKK militants shoot dead a Turkish military officer in a bazaar. Source: [U.S. Department of State](#)
- **October 9, 2014:** PKK militants open fire on police in the eastern province of Bingöl, killing two policemen.
Source: [Australian National Security](#)
- **March 30, 2014:** Three suspected members of ISIS murder two Turkish military personnel and one truck driver at a checkpoint near Nidge, Turkey.
Source: [U.S. Department of State](#)
- **September 30, 2013:** Two members of the DHKP/C attack the Turkish National Police headquarters with rockets, resulting in zero casualties.
Source: [Al-Monitor](#)
- **May 11, 2013:** In the then-deadliest attack in Turkey’s modern history, twin car bombings in Reyhanli, Hatay Province kill 52. Turkish intelligence blames the attacks on Turkish operatives with ties to Bashar al-Assad’s regime. Sources: [Bloomberg Business](#), [U.S. Department of State](#)
- Turkish police report evidence of an al-Qaeda plot to bomb the U.S. Embassy in Ankara.
Source: [New York Times](#)
- **March 19, 2013:** Three members of the DHKP/C synchronize hand grenade attacks on the Ministry of Justice, resulting in zero casualties.
Source: [Hurriyet Daily News](#)
- **February 11, 2013:** A pro-Bashar al-Assad operative detonates a car bomb at the Bab al-Hawa border crossing on the Turkish-Syrian border, killing 13 people and injuring approximately 30 others. Turkish security blame the attack on Mihrac Ural, a Turk belonging to al-Assad’s Alawite sect. Source: [U.S. Department of State](#)
- **February 1, 2013:** A member of the Revolutionary People’s Liberation Party/Front (DHKP/C) explodes a suicide vest at the U.S. embassy in Ankara, killing himself and a Turkish guard.
Source: [CNN](#)
- **September 2, 2012:** Approximately 100 suspected PKK militants attack government buildings in the small town of Beytüşebap, close to the Syrian border. The attacks kill at least 10 soldiers and wound seven more. Source: [U.S. Department of State](#)
- **October 19, 2011:** Approximately 100 PKK militants launch simultaneous attacks on Turkish army outposts in Hakkari province in southeastern Turkey. The attack kills 24 Turkish soldiers. Turkey responds with air and ground assaults against the PKK. Source: [Reuters](#)
- Turkish authorities carry out a raid on suspected al-Qaeda operatives near Ankara. In December 2011, authorities reveal that a Turkish al-Qaeda cell had been plotting a wide-scale bombing attack on churches in Ankara, as well as on the Turkish parliament and U.S. embassy. Source: [Eurasia Review](#)
- **July 9, 2008:** Suspected al-Qaeda insurgents attack the U.S. consulate in Istanbul, killing three Turkish police officers.
Source: [Guardian](#)
- **November 15, 2003:** Al-Qaeda suicide bombers in cars attack an Istanbul synagogue, killing 23 and wounding over 300. Five days later, a powerful bomb rips through Istanbul’s British consulate and a nearby HSBC Bank branch, killing 27 and wounding another 450. Al-Qaeda is found responsible. Osama bin Laden had reportedly given the perpetrators his “blessing” to wage the attacks. Sources: [BBC News](#), [CNN](#), [NBC News](#)

Domestic Counter-Extremism

According to then-Turkish Foreign Minister Feridun Sinirlio?lu, “Turkey stands at the forefront of the terror threat...fighting on not one but three fronts”: against religious extremist organizations such as ISIS, Kurdish PKK separatists, and radical leftwing groups. Officially, Turkey does not distinguish between these designated groups. In July 2015, Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşo?lu said, “there is no difference between PKK and

Turkey: Extremism and Terrorism

Daesh [ISIS].” (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#), [Independent](#))

Following the March 13, 2016, bombing in central Ankara, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan demanded that the definition of “terrorist” be expanded to include those who support terrorism. According to Erdoğan, such individuals might include activists, lawmakers, or journalists. He said: “Their titles as an MP, an academic, an author, a journalist do not change the fact that they are actually terrorists. An act of terror is successful because of these supporters, these accomplices.” (Sources: [BBC News](#), [Turkish Weekly](#))

Although Turkey has adopted a hardline approach toward ISIS and the PKK, its leaders have reportedly granted asylum to jihadists from other extremist and terrorist groups. Following the 2013 coup in Egypt which toppled the newly elected Muslim Brotherhood government, many exiled Brotherhood senior members were given refuge in Turkey. Turkey has also reportedly provided refuge to members of internationally sanctioned terrorist organizations, including members of Hamas, the Khorasan Group, the Nusra Front, and Gamaa Islamiya. During a June 2016 dinner with NGO representatives, Erdoğan said in a speech that labeling groups such as the Nusra Front “terrorists” was improper since they are also fighting against ISIS. Despite condemnation from the U.S. and Egyptian governments over these remarks, Erdoğan insists that he “rejects terrorism and seeks only to protect Muslims’ right to peaceful self-determination.” (Source: [Washington Post](#))

On January 13, 2020, Turkey launched operation “Kapan” to eliminate PKK fighters from the country’s south. The operation was launched in the rural area of Hakkari province and includes a little over 800 security personnel, which includes police forces and gendarmerie. On March 11, 2020, Turkish security forces launched the “Kapan-7 Garisa” counterterrorism operation in the country’s eastern Siirt province. The operation deployed almost 500 personnel to the region in order to undermine the threat of the PKK. Currently, the PKK has a relatively strong presence and a number of bases in Turkey’s eastern and southeastern provinces where the operation will largely be concentrated. In January 2021, Turkey launched the first Operation Eren against the PKK. The series of antiterrorist operations are named after Eren Bülbül, a 15-year-old killed in an anti-PKK on August 11, 2017. (Sources: [Middle East Monitor](#), [Republic of Turkey Ministry of the Interior](#), [Daily Sabah](#), [Daily Sabah](#), [Daily Sabah](#), [Daily Sabah](#))

The Turkish military continued to launch new ground and air counterterrorism operations against the PKK in April 2022. On April 18, 2022, the Turkish military launched Operation Claw-Lock, which targeted PKK members in the Metina, Zap, and Ayashin-Basyan regions in northern Iraq. According to the Turkish military, the PKK has reportedly been preparing to carry out large-scale attacks against the military. On May 23, Erdoğan announced that Ankara would launch military operations along its southern borders to combat terrorist threats from the region. The operation is targeting north of Syria to undermine the YPG. The statement was made within days after Turkey’s objections to Finland and Sweden becoming NATO members. Erdoğan has accused the countries of harboring individuals linked to the PKK. On November 3, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg urged Turkey to endorse Finland and Sweden’s NATO bid, claiming that both countries have done enough to satisfy Ankara’s demands in fighting terrorism. However, Turkish authorities do not believe that the two countries have fully implemented all aspects of the memorandum agreed to in the summer of 2022. Despite reforms in Sweden’s counterterrorism laws to appeal to Turkey’s conditions, in July 2023, Turkey proposed an alternative route for approving Sweden’s membership in NATO. Erdogan announced approving Sweden’s membership would require the European Union to “open the way” for Turkey to join the political and economic union. While Turkey is a candidate to join the EU, Ankara’s flawed democratic institutions and disputes with Cyprus have stalled Ankara’s admittance. (Sources: [Daily Sabah](#), [Reuters](#), [Forbes](#), [Associated Press](#), [PBS](#))

Government Programs

Turkey has several government programs to counter extremism. The first is an outreach program administered by the Turkish National Police (TNP) that seeks to prevent radicalization through early contact with at-risk communities. This program aims to reach vulnerable populations before they are exposed to extremist propaganda and messages. The U.S. embassy in Ankara describes the TNP program as “similar to anti-gang activities in the United States” using intervention to prevent recruitment. (Source: [U.S. Embassy in Turkey](#))

The second program seeks to “undercut violent extremist messaging” and is administered by the Turkish government’s Directorate of Religious Affairs, known as the Diyanet. The Diyanet “oversees Turkey’s 85,000 mosques” and is tasked with promoting a more moderate version of Islam and weakening radical Islamist messaging. The Diyanet tries to accomplish this aim by reinterpreting religious texts and teaching religious education under a more modern framework, and by staffing mosques with Diyanet officials. The Diyanet has 20 centers throughout Turkey. It was founded in 1924 and has been a public institution since 1964, when its role was enshrined in the Turkish constitution and placed under government auspices. The Diyanet functions in accordance with the official secular character of the Turkish constitution “by staying out of all the political views and mentalities and adopting a goal of solidarity and integration as a nation....” Foreign Diyanet branches exist in several countries serving the Turkish diaspora, including the Diyanet Center of America at Lanham, Maryland. The foreign branches focus on exertion of Turkish influence and promoting a Turkish version of Islam, rather than counter-extremism. (Sources: [Diyanet](#), [Independent](#), [U.S. Embassy in Turkey](#), [U.S. Department of](#)

Turkey: Extremism and Terrorism

[State](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [Foreign Affairs](#))

In August 2015, the Turkish Ministry of Interior implemented a program that rewards citizens who come forward to the government with information about suspected terrorists or terrorist-related activities. An individual can receive a monetary reward of up to \$69,000 if their information leads to the arrest of a suspected terrorist. Information that either leads to the capture of a high-level terrorist or prevents a terrorist attack is eligible for a reward of up to \$1.38 million. (Source: [U.S. Department of State](#))

Domestic Military Raids and Intelligence Response

Turkey continues to employ domestic military raids against suspected terrorist targets. During an August 2017 raid in two Turkish provinces, for example, government forces arrested 42 suspected of ties to ISIS or the PKK. Security forces arrested 440 alleged ISIS supporters in a February 2017 raid in 18 provinces. During a series of July 2017 raids, security forces arrested 213 suspected PKK members, 46 ISIS-linked suspects, and eight people allegedly linked to “leftist terrorist groups.” Security forces also arrested 831 alleged followers of U.S.-based Muslim cleric Fethullah Gülen. According to Turkish officials, authorities have detained at least 5,000 suspected ISIS members in the country and deported at least 3,290 foreign militants. On February 11, 2022, Turkish security forces in Istanbul announced they had arrested 22 suspected ISIS terrorists accused of providing financial assistance to ISIS. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Slate](#), [Newsweek](#), [Reuters](#), [Anadolu Agency](#))

Turkey’s National Intelligence Organization (MIT) also monitors domestic terrorist threats and arrests suspected terrorists around the country. On February 10, 2022, the Turkish Ministry of National Defense announced Turkish forces had “neutralized”—either the suspects surrendered, or they were killed or captured—316 terrorists in 18 domestic and cross-border operations since the beginning of the year. In a sign of enhanced cooperation between Turkish and Israeli intelligence agencies, Israeli media reported in February 2021 Israel’s Mossad intelligence agency had helped foil at least 12 terrorist plots against Israelis in Turkey within the past two years. The majority of the plots were reportedly planned by ISIS and targeted visiting Israeli businesspeople in Istanbul. Turkish intelligence has also foiled Iranian plots in the country. In February 2022, MIT arrested eight Iranian spies suspected of plotting to assassinate Israeli-Turkish businessman Yair Geller in the fall of 2021. (Sources: [Anadolu Agency](#), [Times of Israel](#), [Times of Israel](#), [Middle East Eye](#))

Allegations of Human Rights Abuses

Following the July 2016 coup attempt, the Turkish government instituted a two-year-long state of emergency. Human rights organizations have accused the Turkish government of orchestrating the unlawful arrest, abduction, imprisonment, and torture of Gulenists and other terror suspects in Turkey. According to the Turkish interior ministry, authorities detained 35,145 suspected Gulenists between January 2, 2017, and October 30, 2017. Human Rights Watch has accused Turkey of torture of terror suspects, particularly those accused of affiliation with FETO or the PKK. The U.S. State Department has corroborated that Turkish detentions of terror suspects often rely on “scant evidence and minimal due process.” (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#), [CNN](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), [Amnesty International](#))

International Counter-Extremism

In August 2017, the Turkish government said it was taking steps to secure its border with Idlib, Syria, because of the presence of terrorist groups along the Syrian side of the 90-mile border. According to Prime Minister Binali Yildirim, Turkey would limit the movement of non-humanitarian goods across the border. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan declared that the border would remain open for humanitarian purposes but weapons would be forbidden. (Source: [Reuters](#))

Turkey has also increased its military response to cross-border terrorism. In February 2017, for example, the army claimed it had hit 250 ISIS targets on the Syrian side of the Turkish-Syrian border, killing 33. (Source: [Slate](#))

In January 2018, Turkey launched an offensive against a Kurdish enclave in northwest Syria targeting the People’s Protection Units (YPG) Kurdish militia, which Turkish officials accused of posing a “real” threat to Turkey. The Turkish government warned that the YPF would be “cleansed” from the area. The U.S. government had supported the YPG during the fight against ISIS in Syria. The Syrian government warned it would shoot down any Turkish jets flying over Syrian territory. Turkey announced that it would coordinate its offensive with Russia. (Sources: [Associated Press](#), [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#))

Turkey: Extremism and Terrorism

On October 9, 2019, Erdoğan announced the start of Operation Peace Spring. The campaign launched a cross-border offensive into northeastern Syria using airstrikes, artillery bombardments, and a ground invasion against Kurdish forces. Turkey views any Kurdish entity as part of the PKK, an internationally designated terrorist group. Operation Peace Spring follows the abrupt announcement made by U.S. President Donald Trump on October 7, 2019 that declared the withdrawal of U.S. troops from northern Syria and the end of U.S. protection for Kurdish fighters. Kurdish forces have done the bulk of the fighting against ISIS in Syria and lost an estimated 11,000 fighters in the years-long campaign to neutralize the terrorist group. Training, equipping, and assisting those Kurdish forces has been a primary mission of the U.S. military inside Syria. The decision by Trump to draw back on U.S. presence in northeastern Syria gave the Turkish government the green light to attack the Kurds. The group, long considered one of the United States' most reliable partners in Syria, has played a key strategic role in the campaign against ISIS in the region. The White House added Turkey would now be responsible for all captured ISIS fighters who are currently being held by U.S.-backed Kurdish forces in northern Syria. Within a month of conducting Operation Peace Spring, Turkey captured over several hundred people affiliated with ISIS. Turkish interior minister, Suleyman Soyly, later announced that Turkey would send captured ISIS militants back to their home countries within 72 hours, without providing further details on militants whose home countries have nullified their citizenship. Following talks with the U.S., Turkey agreed to pause its offensive on October 17, 2019 to allow Kurdish forces to withdraw from a safe zone that Ankara sought to capture. Upon complete withdrawal of YPG forces on October 29, Operation Peace Spring was suspended. (Sources: [The Soufan Group](#), [The Hill](#), [Washington Post](#), [CNN](#), [New York Times](#), [Reuters](#), [Al Jazeera](#))

On March 1, 2020, Erdoğan declared that Turkey would launch a counteroffensive against the Syrian government. The declaration of Operation Spring Shield Turkey's largest military loss—more than 36 soldiers killed and 30 wounded—in a single attack, and was the first time Turkey openly declared war on the Syrian central government. Turkey claims the show of force will not be directed towards Russian forces who are backing Assad's regime, and instead hope that the counteroffensive will prevent large-scale massacres in the region as well as prevent the flow of Syrian refugees into Turkey. On March 5, 2020, Turkey and Russia—who back opposing sides in Syria's war—agreed to halt fighting in Syria's Idlib, the last stronghold of Syria's rebels. On March 13, Turkey and Russia officially agreed to start joint patrols in Idlib, with the new measures to take effect on March 15. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [Al-Monitor](#), [Defense Post](#))

In June 2020, Turkish troops moved deeper into Iraq in a new offensive against the PKK called Operation Claw-Tiger. After a Turkish drone killed two Iraqi border guards and their driver in August 2020, Turkey declared it would continue striking against the PKK in Iraq. An August 13 statement by Turkey's foreign ministry said Turkey would continue to protect its border from the PKK, but the country was ready to cooperate with Iraq as it is ultimately the Iraqi government's responsibility to act against the PKK in its territory. Between October and November 2020 alone, Turkey claimed it had inflicted significant losses on the PKK and “neutralized” at least 82 militants. Residents in Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region have decried Turkish incursions into the territory and recurring drone strikes, which reportedly keep residents in a constant state of fear. According to NGO Christian Peacemaker Team, Turkish military actions have killed at least 97 civilians and wounded 103 others since August 2015. (Sources: [Al Jazeera](#), [Middle East Eye](#), [Anadolu Agency](#))

On April 18, 2022, the Turkish army launched Operation Claw Lock—a major offensive against PKK hideouts and targets in northern Iraq. The PKK has had its headquarters and main facilities in northern Iraq since the early 1980s. According to Turkey's ministry of defense, more than 50 targets were hit on April 18 in the Metina, Zap, and Avashin-Basyan regions in northern Iraq. By April 25, the ministry of defense announced that the Turkish military had cleared most of northern Iraq of PKK presence. However, there are many caves in the area which could potentially be hiding places for the terrorists. (Sources: [Hurriyet Daily News](#), [Daily Sabah](#))

A couple of months later on June 15, 2022, Turkey launched a rare ground assault into northern Iraq to counter PKK forces. According to the Turkish defense ministry, “commandos” were deployed and supported by drones and helicopters. Reportedly, the ground assault managed to hit more than 150 targets. Following an Istanbul bombing on November 13 that killed six and injured 81, Turkey launched airstrikes over northern regions of Syria and Iraq targeting the bases of the PKK and YPG. According to the Defense Ministry, the November 20 strikes—which ranged from Tall Rifat, northwest Syria to the Qandil mountains, northeast Iraq—destroyed 89 targets and killed a “large number” of “terrorists.” (Sources: [Defense Post](#), [Washington Post](#))

In November 2022, Turkey launched Operation Claw-Sword, a cross-border aerial campaign targeting Kurdish militants in Iraq and Syria. The operation was a response to a November 13 bombing in Istanbul that killed six and wounded more than 80 others. Turkey accused the PKK of responsibility, but the PKK denied any connection to the attack. (Sources: [Daily Sabah](#), [BBC News](#))

ISIS and Syria

Turkey: Extremism and Terrorism

The Turkish parliament approved military intervention against ISIS in Syria and Iraq in 2014. In October 2018, the parliament extended the country's military mandate in Syria and Iraq for another year. Until late July 2015, Turkey pursued a policy of noninterventionism regarding ISIS. This meant it declined to permit coalition jets to fly from its airbase at Incirlik, despite being a NATO member. It also meant Turkey was reluctant to allow PKK-affiliated Syrian forces to help the residents of Kobani, who were being targeted by ISIS. The international community has also charged Turkey with maintaining lax border policies and accepting an ISIS presence inside Syria. In 2014, then-Vice President Joe Biden publicly disparaged Turkey's reluctance to degrade ISIS, flouting the White House's official line of not criticizing Turkish non-action. Turkey's permissiveness could be explained by its larger focus on the "Kurdish problem," in which Turkey appeared to allow ISIS to carry out activities that weakened the PKK and the Kurdish independence movement. Biden later apologized for his remarks after Turkey's government took offense. (Sources: [Agence France-Presse](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [New York Times](#), [Atlantic Council](#), [CNN](#))

Since the ISIS-linked suicide bombing in Suruç in July 2015, the Turkish government has assumed a more active role against the terror group. In August of that year, Turkey carried out 20 raids in 19 different cities and deployed more military forces to known ISIS transit routes along the Turkish-Syrian border. The Turkish air force also began carrying out airstrikes against the group in Syria. Ankara also permitted U.S.-led coalition forces to use Turkish bases when conducting strikes against ISIS. On November 6, 2015, the U.S. deployed six F-15 fighter jets to Incirlik air base. (Sources: [Guardian](#), [NTV](#), [Atlantic Council](#), [Carnegie Europe](#), [Independent](#))

On July 16, 2016, as part of its effort to fend off an attempted military coup, Turkish authorities implemented a 24-hour shutdown of Incirlik Air Base, including U.S. counterterrorism operations. The following day, Turkish authorities reportedly arrested General Bekir Ercan Van and 10 other service members at Incirlik Air Base for allegedly participating in the failed coup. Turkish officials claimed the soldiers at Incirlik provided defectors with vital support, including air-to-air refueling to defector fighter jets in Ankara. The U.S. Central Command was reportedly forced to temporarily adjust its plans for anti-ISIS sorties. Following the resumption of U.S. counterterrorism operations on July 17, then-U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry stated, "[Turkish officials] assure me that there will be no interruption of our counter-[ISIS] efforts." According to the U.S. Department of Defense, the Incirlik Air Base is critical to NATO's mission in the region. (Sources: [Los Angeles Times](#), [Washington Post](#), [Wall Street Journal](#), [USA Today](#), [ABC News](#), [Huffington Post](#), [U.S. Department of Defense](#))

On August 24, 2016, the Turkish military sent tanks, special forces, and warplanes into northern Syria in a U.S.-backed operation dubbed Operation Euphrates Shield. The offensive allowed Syrian rebel groups to seize control over Jarabulus, an ISIS-held Syrian border town. Jarabulus had reportedly been ISIS's last major foothold near the Turkish border. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavosoglu said the offensive was "not going to stop there at the border" and that Turkey "will provide any necessary contribution to cleanse [ISIS] from our neighbors in Iraq and Syria." The following day on August 25, 10 more Turkish tanks crossed the Syrian border to support the anti-ISIS offensive. Turkey concluded the operation on March 29, 2017. According to the Turkish government, the operation succeeded in neutralizing 3,060 ISIS fighters. (Sources: [Washington Post](#), [NPR](#), [Agence France-Presse](#), [Reuters](#), [New York Times](#), [U.S. Department of State](#))

On September 19, 2016, Erdoğan announced at a news conference his plan to create a "safe zone" in northern Syria along the Turkish border. According to Erdoğan, the safe zone will be used to shelter and train Turkish-backed rebels and resettle refugees. In January 2018, Turkey began a military campaign against U.S.-backed Kurdish forces in Afrin, Syria, to secure an area for the first safe zone. Turkey views the Kurdish militias as a threat to Turkish security and warned that the People's Protection Units (YPG) would be "cleansed" from the area. The following month, an ex-ISIS fighter claimed that Turkey was recruiting former ISIS jihadists to fight against the YPG. Turkey captured Afrin in March 2018. That August, Erdoğan announced Turkey's intention to create more so-called safe zones to allow refugees to return to Syria. (Sources: [Bloomberg](#), [Washington Post](#), [Associated Press](#), [Guardian](#), [France24](#), [Independent](#), [Associated Press](#), [Reuters](#))

In October 2019, the Turkey's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced it would take custody of ISIS members and their families in Turkish-controlled areas of Syria. The ministry claimed it would work with countries of origin and international organizations to rehabilitate spouses and children not involved in crimes, while supporting international efforts to repatriate, prosecute, and rehabilitate foreign fighters. As of November 2019, Turkey had approximately 1,200 foreign fighters in its prison system. That month, Turkey began repatriating some captured ISIS foreign fighters, including those whose citizenship had been revoked by their home countries. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#), [NBC News](#))

On February 29, 2020, Erdoğan declared that he had opened his country's borders for migrants to cross into Europe. Erdoğan claimed that Turkey did not have the capacity to handle the numbers of refugees fleeing the war in Syria, which resulted in his decision to break the 2016 pact under which the European Union promised to pay 6 billion euros in return for Turkey curbing migration flows. European leaders have not kept their promises to assist Turkey in supporting the 3.6 million Syrian refugees already in the country. Additionally, Erdoğan claims the EU has had a lack of solidarity with his military operations in Syria. It is uncertain if any of the refugees heading towards the EU were former members of ISIS, but the possibility will potentially lead to amended security measures taken on by border forces. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [Guardian](#))

Turkey: Extremism and Terrorism

On May 10, 2023, Russia hosted Turkey, Syria, and Iran for peace talks—the highest-level contact between Ankara and Damascus in over a decade. Reconciliation efforts occurred ahead of Turkey’s national elections on May 14. Given increased anti-refugee sentiments and an underperforming economy, Erdoğan has faced immense pressure to send Syrian refugees back to their home country. Syrian Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad later expressed that while Turkey and Syria share common goals, the primary goal involves ending all “illegal” military presences in the country. It is uncertain if the peace talks will endure following Erdoğan’s success in securing a third term as Turkey’s president. On June 1, 2023, Turkey’s election board certified the results of the May 28 presidential runoff election, confirming Erdoğan’s third term. Results slanted slightly in Erdoğan’s favor, with him gaining 52 percent of the national vote to Kılıçdaroğlu’s 48 percent. Erdoğan’s term will last until 2028. (Sources: [Associated Press](#), [CNN](#), [Associated Press](#), [Reuters](#))

International Organization Membership

Turkey is a founding member of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF), “an informal, multilateral counterterrorism (CT) platform” launched in September 2011 “to reduce the vulnerability of people everywhere to terrorism by effectively preventing, combating, and prosecuting terrorist acts and countering incitement and recruitment to terrorism.” The GCTF comprises 30 members: 29 countries plus the European Union as a single member. Turkey is co-chair alongside the Netherlands. (Sources: [Global Counterterrorism Forum](#), [U.S. Department of State](#))

Turkey is also a member of Hedayah (meaning “Guidance” in Arabic), one “of three GCTF-inspired initiatives.” Hedayah is headquartered in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. It was formed in 2012 “to serve as the premier international institution for training, dialogue, collaboration, and research to counter violent extremism...in support of long-term, global efforts to prevent and counter terrorism.” (Sources: [Global Counterterrorism Forum](#), [Hedayah](#), [The National](#), [Hedayah Newsletter](#))

In Europe, Turkey is an observer of the Eurasian Group on Combating Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism, as well as a member of the 47-member Committee of Experts on Terrorism (CODEXTER), established by the Council of Europe in 2003. According to the Turkish National Police, Turkey also has bilateral security cooperation agreements with 59 countries. (Sources: [Committee of Experts on Terrorism](#), [Turkish National Police](#))

In mid-December 2015, Saudi Arabia announced the establishment of its “Islamic military alliance” against terrorism, and included Turkey as a member. Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu hailed the coalition, stating: “The raising of Muslim countries’ voices together against terror is the best response to those who try to associate terror with Islam.” (Source: [Washington Post](#))

Turkey joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in February 1952. According to Turkey’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Turkey considers NATO the “linchpin of the Transatlantic ties and Euro-Atlantic security.” During the Cold War, Turkey aided NATO in securing the alliance’s southeastern border against the Soviet Union. Since the Cold War’s end, Turkey has increased its role within the alliance by supporting NATO’s military missions. During the 1990-91 Gulf War, the United States launched bombing raids on Iraq from Turkey’s Incirlik Air Base. Following the September 11, 2001, terror attacks on the United States, the United States invoked NATO’s Article 5 for the first time in the organization’s history. Article 5 refers to the principle of joint defense among NATO’s members. With the U.S. invocation of Article 5, Turkey joined other NATO members in declaring their support for the U.S. response to the attacks. In November 2001, Turkey announced it would send 90 special forces troops to Afghanistan to support the United States and train anti-Taliban fighters. Beginning in 2015, Turkey was a primary contributor to NATO’s Resolute Support Mission to Afghanistan, contributing a 600-strong unit to train and support security forces. (Sources: [Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#), [Republic of Türkiye Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [Atlantic](#), [NATO](#), [NATO, 9/11 Memorial & Museum](#), [New York Times](#))

Turkey has supported NATO’s expansion to include other European states “willing and able to assume the responsibilities and obligations of membership.” Nonetheless, Turkey has voiced opposition to some NATO expansion based on its own security policies. After Turkey’s own ties with Israel contracted in 2010, Turkey prevented NATO from cooperating with Israel for six years. Turkey has also blocked NATO plans in Eastern Europe and confronted NATO members over their alleged support for Kurdish terrorists. In May 2022, Finland and Sweden applied to join NATO out of concern over the expansion of Russia’s war with Ukraine. Turkey opposed Finland and Sweden joining NATO because of the countries’ support for Kurdish militants. Turkey demanded Finland and Sweden end restrictions on arms exports to Turkey and extradite members of specific Kurdish organizations opposed to the current Turkish government. NATO’s leadership has sought to mediate the dispute. On June 12, 2022, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said Turkey had “legitimate concerns” over counterterrorism as “no other NATO ally has suffered more terrorist attacks than Turkey.” Turkey threatened to delay Sweden and Finland’s entry into NATO for at least a year until the two countries agree to Turkey’s terms. (Sources: [New York Times](#), [Associated Press](#), [Guardian](#), [Wall Street Journal](#))

Turkey: Extremism and Terrorism

On January 15, 2023, Erdoğan demanded Sweden and Finland deport or extradite up to 130 “terrorists” to Turkey before the Turkish parliament approves their bids to join NATO. Turkey called on Sweden in particular to adopt a tougher stance toward terrorism. On January 21, protests erupted in Sweden against Turkey’s blockage of Sweden and Finland’s NATO memberships. During protests outside Turkey’s embassy in Stockholm, Rasmus Paludan, leader of Danish far-right political party Hard Line, led a Quran burning, sparking similar protests around Europe. Paludan also has Swedish citizenship. In response to the wave of Quran burnings and protests, the United States and several European countries temporarily closed their missions in Turkey and issued warnings of possible terrorism and violence against their citizens. On March 31, 2023, Turkey approved Finland’s NATO membership bid, but Ankara has not wavered in blocking Sweden’s application citing Stockholm’s lax policies on Quran burnings and its continued harboring of Kurdish militants. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [Reuters](#), [U.S. Embassy and Consulates in Türkiye](#), [Reuters](#), [BBC News](#))

Legislation

Turkey’s Anti-Terror law defines terrorism as any act that seeks to change or damage – among other things – “the characteristics of the Republic as specified in the Constitution, its political, legal, social, secular and economic system...the internal and external security of the State, public order or general health” using “pressure, force and violence, terror, intimidation, oppression or threat.” The U.S. State Department describes Turkish legislation as focused on confronting internal threats—notably from the PKK—to the detriment of global counterterrorism efforts. The U.S. government has also expressed related concerns that legislation defines terrorism too narrowly as a crime targeting the Turkish state or Turkish citizens, thus hindering efforts to combat international terrorist organizations such as ISIS. (Sources: [United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime](#), [Institute for Strategic Dialogue](#))

The European Union has also criticized Turkey’s anti-terror law for violating human rights and freedom of expression. Humanitarian organizations and international institutions, including the EU, have raised concerns that the law has been broadly applied to target political opponents, journalists, and activists. In April 2013, Turkey passed changes to anti-terror laws that brought it closer to EU freedom of expression standards. These amendments included a narrower definition of terrorist propaganda, and criminalized illegal group declarations only if they incited violence or threats of violence. The EU continues to harbor concerns that Turkish anti-terror laws are applied too broadly, leading to the detention and prosecution of thousands of politicians, reporters, and activists throughout 2014. (Sources: [Reuters](#), [Institute for Strategic Dialogue](#))

Turkey signed the Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism in October 2015 in Riga, Latvia. The Protocol is especially relevant to Turkey because it will “criminalize the movement of those who transit through the country in order to join the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant...” This 2015 Protocol builds on the 2005 Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism, and other supplemental protocols since ratified. It will also criminalize the act of receiving training for terrorism as well as funding or organizing travel for terrorism. However, Research Center for Security Strategies (GÜSAM) President Ercan Ta?tekin has expressed skepticism that Turkey will implement the Protocol. A former senior police officer and deputy chief of the Turkish branch of the International Police Association (IPA), Ta?tekin pointed to past instances in which Turkey had signed global agreements “but failed to carry out its duties,” such as on cyber-crime and children’s rights. (Sources: [Today’s Zaman](#))

Turkey maintains a banned persons list, “with a view to prevent travel into Turkey by individuals identified by foreign governments and internal security units as potential foreign terrorist fighters.” Turkey has sought technical assistance from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security on developing an automated Advanced Passenger Information/Passenger Name Record system. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#), [U.S. Department of State](#), [CODEXTER](#))

Combating Terrorist Financing

Since 1991, Turkey has been a member of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), an intergovernmental organization that works to combat the financing of terrorism. Until October 2014, Turkey was the only NATO member on the FATF “gray list,” a group of countries with significant deficiencies in Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Combating the Financing of Terrorism (CFT) strategy. In its fifteenth follow-up report published in October 2014, the FATF commended Turkey for making “significant progress” since the 2007 mutual evaluation. According to the FATF, “Turkey has reached a satisfactory level of compliance with all core Recommendations.” (Sources: [Today’s Zaman](#), [Financial Action Task Force](#), [Financial Action Task Force](#))

However, the FATF report pointed to lingering problems in Turkey’s definition of “terrorism financing” and poor compliance with Customer Due Diligence (CDD) standards. Enhanced CDD guidelines for “sensitive countries, sensitive businesses and higher risk customers” remained an

Turkey: Extremism and Terrorism

unaddressed deficiency, according to the FATF. According to [reports](#), Turkey is resistant to certain FATF standards. In particular, Turkey's financial support of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and assistance to Hamas precludes blanket acceptance of the FATF requirement to freeze funds automatically, if requested by a foreign country that classifies those groups as terrorist organizations. In October 2014, the FATF reportedly cited improvements in Turkey's counterterrorism finance operations, however no cases of terrorist financing were reported to the FATF in 2015.

(Sources: [Financial Action Task Force](#), [Institute for Strategic Dialogue](#), [U.S. Department of State](#))

In April 2015, the Turkish Customs and Trade Ministry issued new guidance on the carrying of cash over its borders. It said that the value of carried cash "is not required to be declared and passengers cannot be forced to make declarations." This caused a flurry of domestic concerns that the move might facilitate terrorist finance. Republic People's Party (CHP) Umut Oran warned parliament that the new wording—which specified that it was not mandatory to declare cash—might encourage tax evasion, money laundering, and terror financing. Oran stated his concern that Turkey may become a "money laundering paradise." Similarly, economist Ugur Gurses stated that there was "no rational explanation" for the new code, adding "[a]ll banking transactions over \$50,000 have to be reported to the Treasury. Theoretically, that is no longer the case." Citing the threat posed by ISIS specifically, Gurses also emphasized that with the removal of customs controls, "[y]ou eliminate your deterrent." A high-ranking Turkish Customs official speaking to *Al-Monitor* reportedly also characterized the new code as "unenforceable," adding "I cannot tell you what is punishable and what is not." (Sources: [Al-Monitor](#), [Hurriyet](#))

In December 2015, Turkey ratified the Council of Europe's Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime and on the Financing of Terrorism. The convention seeks to heighten international cooperation in investigating and disrupting crimes related to terrorist financing. (Source: [Hurriyet Daily News](#))

Peacekeeping Operations

According to Bilkent University Assistant Professor Nil S. Santana, Turkey's peacekeeping priority is involvement with NATO, "as Turkey perceived contributions to NATO peacekeeping missions as a way to show its usefulness to the U.S. and to NATO's security umbrella." (Sources: [World Politics Review](#), [Today's Zaman](#))

Turkey's membership in NATO and military ties with Russia, however, have resulted in U.S. sanctions against the country. In December 2020, the United States imposed sanctions on Turkey's Presidency of Defense Industries (SSB), the country's primary defense procurement agency. According to the U.S. Department of State, the SSB has knowingly engaged in "a significant transaction" with Rosoboronexport, Russia's main arms export entity, by procuring the S-400 surface-to-air missile system. The United States claims the S-400 is incompatible with NATO systems and could be used to gain intelligence for Russia on U.S. fighter jets. The U.S. government also sanctioned SSB officials Ismail Demir, Mustafa Alper Deniz, Serhat Genço?lu, and Faruk Yi?it. The sanctions were levied under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA). That month, U.S. Ambassador to NATO Kay Bailey warned Turkey that putting a Russian-made missile defense system in the middle of NATO "is out of bounds." (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#), [U.S. Department of the Treasury](#), [Daily Sabah](#), [New York Times](#))

Turkey also participates in several U.N. peacekeeping operations, especially in the missions in Africa. It has forces in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO), in Darfur, Sudan (UNAMID), South Sudan (UNMISS), Liberia (UNMIL). Turkey withdrew its land troops from the mission in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in 2013. In September 2015, then-Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu announced plans to supplement existing U.N. peacekeeping missions with additional Turkish military officers and aircraft. (Sources: [Turkish National Police](#), [Today's Zaman](#), [World Politics Review](#), [World Bulletin](#))

Public Opinion

View of the United States

A majority of Turks (74 percent) believe U.S. power and influence to be a threat to their country, according to a 2017 Pew Research Center poll. The finding represented a 28-point increase from 2015 results. According to the 2017 poll, 72 percent of Turks believe U.S. power and influence to be the top threat to their country, while refugee displacement from Syria and Iraq ranked second. The poll did not ask about ISIS attacks because of security concerns. (Source: [Pew Research Center](#))

Turkey: Extremism and Terrorism

According to an October 2014 Pew poll, “it is hard to find any country or organization the Turkish people really like, except, of course, Turkey itself.” A majority of Turkish people view the United States, the European Union, and NATO negatively. Such unfavorable perceptions may partially explain the result of a Spring 2015 survey, which found that only 36 percent favored Turkey joining the anti-ISIS coalition. (Sources: [Pew Research Center](#), [Pew Research Center](#))

Extremism

An August 2017 Pew Research Center poll found that 73 percent of Turks held negative views of ISIS, while only 8 percent held favorable views of the terror group. Another 19 percent held no opinion of the group. The percentage of Turks with negative views of ISIS remained the same from Pew’s 2015 survey. (Sources: [Pew Research Center](#), [Pew Research Center](#))

Similarly, the October 2014 Pew poll found that 85 percent of the Turkish population had negative views on al-Qaeda and on Hezbollah. A small majority of 58 percent said that targeting civilians with violence such as suicide bombing was never justified. An earlier survey from 2010 found that 51 percent of the population viewed Islamic extremists as a threat to their lives. (Sources: [Pew Research Center](#), [The International Republican Institute](#))

Islam and Sharia

Although 98 percent of Turks are Sunni Muslim, their overall rejection of extremist groups appears to point to a prevailing secularism in the public sphere. A survey conducted by the International Republican Institute in May 2010 found that 72 percent believe the activities of Islamic foundations should be closely controlled and that 77 percent believe sharia (Islamic law) should not be adapted as a new government model. An August 2017 Pew Research Center poll found that only 12 percent of Turkey’s population favored the implementation of sharia (Islamic law). (Sources: [Pew Research Center](#), [The International Republican Institute](#))

Kurds

According to polling data from the Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies, Turks did not view Islamic extremism as the biggest threat in 2013. At that time, only 12 percent of those surveyed viewed Islamic extremists in Syria as the top threat against Turkey. The Kurdish issue still appears to dominate Turkish public opinion. The survey found 36 percent of Turks viewed the establishment of an independent Kurdish state as the country’s biggest threat. Moreover, 66 percent did not support negotiations with PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan. (Sources: [Centre for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies \(EDAM\)](#), [Transatlantic Trends](#))