



Home Office

# **Country Information and Guidance**

## **Turkey: HDP (Peoples' Democratic Party)**

**Version 1.0**

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# Preface

This document provides country of origin information (COI) and guidance to Home Office decision makers on handling particular types of protection and human rights claims. This includes whether claims are likely to justify the granting of asylum, humanitarian protection or discretionary leave and whether – in the event of a claim being refused – it is likely to be certifiable as ‘clearly unfounded’ under s94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

Decision makers must consider claims on an individual basis, taking into account the case specific facts and all relevant evidence, including: the guidance contained with this document; the available COI; any applicable case law; and the Home Office casework guidance in relation to relevant policies.

## Country Information

The COI within this document has been compiled from a wide range of external information sources (usually) published in English. Consideration has been given to the relevance, reliability, accuracy, objectivity, currency, transparency and traceability of the information and wherever possible attempts have been made to corroborate the information used across independent sources, to ensure accuracy. All sources cited have been referenced in footnotes. It has been researched and presented with reference to the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), dated April 2008, and the European Asylum Support Office’s research guidelines, [Country of Origin Information report methodology](#), dated July 2012.

## Feedback

Our goal is to continuously improve the guidance and information we provide. Therefore, if you would like to comment on this document, please [e-mail us](#).

## Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

The Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) was set up in March 2009 by the Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration to make recommendations to him about the content of the Home Office’s COI material. The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office’s COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy.

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Information about the IAGCI’s work and a list of the COI documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector’s website at <http://icinspector.independent.gov.uk/country-information-reviews/>

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# Guidance

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Basis of claim

- 1.1.1 Fear of persecution or serious harm by state or non-state actors due to the person's activities as a member or supporter of the HDP (Peoples' Democratic Party).

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## 2. Consideration of Issues

### 2.1 Credibility

- 2.1.1 For further guidance on assessing credibility, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).
- 2.1.2 Decision-makers must also check whether there has been a previous application for a UK visa or another form of leave. Asylum applications matched to visas should be investigated prior to the asylum interview: see the [Asylum Instruction on Visa Matches, Asylum Claims from UK Visa Applicants](#).
- 2.1.3 Decision-makers should also consider the need to conduct language analysis testing: see the [Asylum Instruction on Language Analysis](#).

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### 2.2 Exclusion

- 2.2.1 The HDP and the PKK are separate organisations with different goals. However, the HDP has been accused of links to the PKK. The PKK has been responsible for numerous serious human rights abuses. It has been proscribed in the UK since March 2001 under the Terrorism Act 2000 and is also on the EU list of terrorist organisations (see country information and guidance on [Turkey: PKK](#)).
- 2.2.2 If it is accepted that the person belongs to, or professes to belong to, or invites support for, the PKK - or has done so in the past - then the decision-maker must consider whether one of the Exclusion clauses is applicable.
- 2.2.3 For further information on the exclusion clauses, discretionary leave and restricted leave, see the [Asylum Instruction on Exclusion: Article 1F of the Refugee Convention](#), the [Asylum Instruction on Discretionary Leave](#) and the [Asylum Instruction on Restricted Leave](#).

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### 2.3 Assessment of risk

- 2.3.1 The HDP was formed in 2013 as an alliance of Kurds, other national minorities, women's and green groups and others on the political left. The HDP has tried to appeal to all Turks, besides its traditional Kurdish base in the south and south east of Turkey, and fielded several minority ethnic

candidates for the elections of June and November 2015 (see [HDP: Background](#)).

#### Pre-election violence

- 2.3.2 There were several hundred attacks targeting HDP election offices in the run-up to the elections of June and November 2015. On 18 May 2015, there were simultaneous bomb attacks on the party's bureaus in the cities of Adana and Mersin. It is unclear who was responsible for these attacks, but some commentators suggested that Turkish far-right nationalist groups may have been involved, while others claim that President Erdogan and other senior members of the Government may have provided partial incitement with public statements conflating the HDP with the PKK. A number of the attacks appeared to be in retaliation for PKK actions (see [Motives for, and incitement to, harassment](#) and [Attacks on HDP offices and bureaus](#)).
- 2.3.3 On 5 June 2015, there was a bomb attack on the HDP's final election rally in Diyarbakir and this was followed by a further bomb attack on 10 October 2015 at a peace rally in Ankara, which was attended by the HDP. One of the suicide bombers was identified as a Daesh-linked terrorist (see [Attacks on HDP rallies](#) and [Suruc bombing](#)).
- 2.3.4 In August 2015, the HDP estimated that more than 1,000 of its members had been detained since President Erdogan's crack-down following the Suruc bombing of July 2015, which was believed to have been carried out by a Turkish citizen who was an ethnic Kurd and reportedly had links to Daesh (see [Suruc bombing](#)).
- 2.3.5 It was further suggested that arrests and detentions of HDP members were linked with the collapse of the ceasefire between the Government and the PKK in July 2015 as Turkish security forces had been carrying out major operations in the southeast of the country. A number of mayors and politicians with links to the HDP were arrested; in at least some cases, this appeared to be in connection with declaring 'autonomy' in their regions or because they were accused of supporting the PKK. Local officials from the HDP were detained, apparently in connection with a crackdown on the PKK's youth wing (see [Suruc bombing](#) and [Arrest, detention and investigation of HDP supporters](#)).
- 2.3.6 In October 2015, the HDP claimed that a local court had banned the HDP's election manifesto due to its references to 'administrative self-rule.' Also in October 2015, a Criminal Judge of Peace ordered the confiscation of an HDP leaflet which referred to 'decentralised government' and was used as criminal evidence in an investigation under the Anti-Terrorism Law (see [Autonomy for Kurds](#)).

#### Post-election violence

- 2.3.7 A prosecutor opened an investigation into Selahattin Demirtaş in December 2015 over his call for greater independence for Kurds, and President Erdoğan stated that he supported criminal probes into HDP leaders over their comments about self-rule. Turkish police detained senior

local officials from the HDP on 8 January 2016 in a raid on one of its Istanbul offices, just two days after President Erdoğan said he backed legal action against its members. Party officials said no reason was given for the detentions (see [Arrest, detention and investigation of HDP supporters](#)).

- 2.3.8 Nine Kurdish politicians and HDP members were arrested in December 2015 in Izmir province, accused of supporting the PKK (see [Alleged links between HDP and PKK](#)).

### Conclusion

- 2.3.9 Those at particular risk of adverse attention by the authorities include senior members of the HDP and HDP members suspected of involvement with the PKK or suspected of supporting autonomy for Kurdish people. When ordinary members of the HDP have come to the adverse attention of the authorities, this has generally been whilst participating in demonstrations and rallies; an ordinary member would not otherwise generally attract the adverse attention of the authorities on account of their political beliefs (see [Arrest, detention and investigation of HDP supporters](#)).
- 2.3.10 See also country information and guidance on [Turkey: PKK](#) and [Turkey: Kurds](#).
- 2.3.11 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## 2.4 Protection

- 2.4.1 If the person's fear is of ill treatment/persecution at the hands of the state, they will not be able to avail themselves of the protection of the authorities.
- 2.4.2 Where the person's fear is of ill-treatment at the hands of non-state actors (including rogue state actors), effective protection may be available.
- 2.4.3 There were reports that the Turkish authorities did not provide adequate protection when HDP offices came under sustained attack from violent mobs. There were calls by bodies such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International for the authorities to take a firmer stance in investigating these events and in dealing with similar situations in the future. There were also reports that the police fired teargas at people who were helping those injured in, or fleeing bomb attacks on, the HDP rally in June and on a peace rally in October 2015 (see [State protection](#)).
- 2.4.4 However, in September 2015, it was reported that police had arrested over 300 people in relation to attacks against the HDP. The attacks were strongly condemned by President Erdogan, Prime Minister Davutoglu and other political leaders. A suspect was detained over the blasts on a pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) rally in Diyarbakir and the bombing was condemned by President Erdogan and other political leaders. The Minister for Culture condemned the attacks against HDP offices in Adana and Mersin, and said that a special unit had been formed with the Police,

Gendarmerie and the National Intelligence Organization (MIT) to investigate the blasts. 13 people suspected of involvement in the attack on a peace rally in Ankara, which the HDP attended, were detained and the investigation into the attack continued (see [State protection](#)).

2.4.5 See also country information and guidance on [Turkey: Background including actors of protection and internal relocation](#).

2.4.6 For further guidance on assessing the availability or not of state protection, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## 2.5 Internal relocation

2.5.1 If the person is at risk of persecution or serious harm by the state, they will not be able to relocate to escape that risk.

2.5.2 If the person is at risk of persecution or serious harm by non-state actors (including rogue state actors), internal relocation to escape that risk is likely to be available.

2.5.3 Turkish citizens are free to move throughout the country (see country information and guidance on [Turkey: Background including actors of protection and internal relocation](#)).

2.5.4 Decision-makers must give careful consideration to the relevance and reasonableness of internal relocation on a case-by-case basis, taking full account of the individual circumstances of the particular person.

2.5.5 For further guidance on considering internal relocation, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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## 2.6 Certification

2.6.1 Where a claim based on being a member or supporter of the HDP falls to be refused, it may be certifiable as clearly unfounded under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

2.6.2 For further guidance on certification, see the [Appeals Instruction on Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under Section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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## 3. Policy Summary

3.1.1 The HDP and the PKK are separate organisations with different goals. However, the HDP has been accused of links to the PKK. The PKK has been responsible for numerous serious human rights abuses and is proscribed in the UK under the Terrorism Act 2000. If it is accepted that the person belongs to, or professes to belong to, or invites support for the PKK - or has done so in the past - then the Exclusion clauses are likely to be applicable.

- 3.1.2 Many HDP members have been arrested by the authorities and charged with involvement with either the PKK or with supporting autonomy for Kurds. It is legitimate for the authorities to prosecute those who belong to, or profess to belong to, or invite support for the PKK, or who have done so in the past.
- 3.1.3 Both during the June and November 2015 elections and following the collapse of the ceasefire with the PKK there were numerous attacks on HDP offices when HDP members and supporters were injured. It is unclear who carried out each of these attacks, but Turkish nationalists have been suspected of some attacks in retaliation for PKK activity, whilst other attacks have been attributed to Daesh.
- 3.1.4 The Turkish authorities have been criticised for not providing adequate protection when HDP offices and peaceful demonstrations came under attack. However, some of these attacks have been strongly condemned by the Turkish government and the authorities have carried out investigations or arrested suspects in connection with them. Effective protection is, in general, available.
- 3.1.5 When ordinary members of the HDP have come to the adverse attention of the authorities, this has generally been whilst participating in demonstrations and rallies; an ordinary member would not otherwise generally attract the adverse attention of the authorities on account of their political beliefs. However, if the person is a senior member of the HDP or has otherwise come to the adverse attention of the authorities because of suspected involvement with the PKK or support for autonomy for Kurdish people, they may be at risk, but each case must be assessed according to its individual facts.
- 3.1.6 Internal relocation to escape any risk from non-state actors (including rogue state actors) is in general likely to be available, but each case must be assessed according to its individual facts.

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## 4. Legal position

- 4.1.1 The US Department of State's Country Report on Human Rights Practices in Turkey, which covered the year 2014 and was published in June 2015, stated, 'The constitution and law provide citizens the ability to change their government through free and fair elections, and citizens exercised this right through elections based on universal suffrage. The government restricted the activities of some political parties and leaders.'<sup>1</sup>

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## 5. The HDP (Peoples' Democratic Party)

### 5.1 Background

- 5.1.1 The Austrian Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum published a report in 2015 which stated:

'The HDP was formed in 2013 as an alliance of Kurds, other national minorities, leftists, women's and green groups. It is understood that jailed PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan recommended its establishment... Öcalan, having seen a big void on the left flank of the opposition, called for an umbrella party to bring all leftist movements in Turkey together, since the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) appealed only to the Kurds and confined itself to the south-east of the country. BDP and HDP combined different leftist and socialist, progressive and western orientated groups, since the BDP had serious problems to reach out for electoral segments beyond the Kurds in south- and southeastern regions of Anatolia...

'Quoting its manifesto, the HDP defines itself as a party favoring democracy, freedom and equality, peace, labor, self-government, gender equality and ecology...

'... the HDP started to present itself as a genuinely Turkish party reaching out to voters beyond its mainly Kurdish support base namely to secular Turks, women and gays. During the election campaign the HDP struggled to portray itself as an option for all Turks wishing to stop Erdoğan and seeking a more left-oriented Turkey... Already upon its foundation it was obvious that activists as well as sympathizers of the Gezi-Park protests would consider the HDP as a political option, since the party was ardently involved in those activities...

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<sup>1</sup> US Department of State. 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014,' published June 2015 (Turkey; Section 3; Respect for Political Rights: the right of citizens to change their Government).

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=236586> Date accessed: 13 January 2016.

'On a quest to become a nationwide party appealing to voters beyond its traditional Kurdish base, the HDP fielded several minority candidates for the election race 2015 - Armenians, Yezidi, Syriacs, Roma and Alevi...

'In line with its goals, the HDP upon its founding in 2013 allocated a 10 percent quota for LGBT individuals beside the 50 percent quota for women. As a result of the 2015 parliamentary elections 40 percent of the HDP's 80 new MPs are women, the highest proportion of any party. HDP candidates included Armenians, Yezidi and Assyrians alongside Kurds. And the HDP had the only openly gay candidate in the country.'<sup>2</sup>

- 5.1.2 EurasiaNet noted: 'Paylan [Garo Paylan, parliamentarian-elect of the HDP] was among three Armenian candidates for the party, although he was the only one elected [in June 2015]. The party's campaign strategy was to reach out beyond its Kurdish base, on a platform of pluralism and democracy. The party also selected a Roma and LGBT candidate, who made unsuccessful runs for parliament, and an incumbent Assyrian Christian, who was reelected.'<sup>3</sup>

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## 5.2 Elections of June and November 2015

- 5.2.1 The United States Congressional Research Service commented as follows on the elections of June 2015:

'The AKP fell short of a parliamentary majority, let alone the supermajority that would have enabled it to hold a popular referendum on a "presidential system" configured to increase the overall power of the office and its current occupant (Erdogan). Some of the seats the AKP had counted on went to the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) - a party rooted in the Kurdish nationalist movement - when the HDP crossed Turkey's 10% minimum electoral threshold in the elections. HDP leader Selahattin Demirtas's ... strategy involved reaching out beyond the HDP's Kurdish base to liberal and secular Turks and other voters wary or weary of Erdogan. Many conservative and religious Kurds who are largely concentrated in southeastern Turkey and had supported the AKP in previous elections apparently turned to the HDP.'<sup>4</sup>

Minority Rights Group International noted that the HDP gained 13% of the vote and 80 seats in the Turkish parliament, preventing the AKP from controlling a majority.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Republic of Austria. Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum. 'The Kurds. History, Religion, Language, Politics,' published in 2015. [http://www.bfa.gv.at/files/broschueren/KURDS\\_Monographie\\_2015\\_11.pdf](http://www.bfa.gv.at/files/broschueren/KURDS_Monographie_2015_11.pdf) Date accessed: 8 January 2016.

<sup>3</sup> EurasiaNet. 'Turkey: Parliamentary Elections Give Ethnic Armenians Political Voice,' dated 11 June 2015. Available via Refworld: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/559a4d3d4.html> Date accessed: 7 January 2016.

<sup>4</sup> United States Congressional Research Service. 'Turkey After June 2015 Elections: Erdogan and the AKP Fall Short,' dated 16 June 2015. IN10292. Available via the Refworld website: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/55a4ddbc4.html> Date accessed: 7 January 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Minority Rights Group International. 'Concerned by ongoing violence in Turkey, MRG urges peaceful resolution to crisis,' dated 15 September 2015. Available via Refworld website:

- 5.2.2 An article by the Middle East Forum of November 2015 stated, 'After refusing to share power with the opposition in a coalition government [following the elections of June 2015], Erdoğan called new elections to replace the hung parliament. Calling the June election results a "mistake" that the Turkish people had to "correct" in a new vote, he set about changing their minds.'<sup>6</sup> In the resulting elections of 1 November 2015, the HDP only just managed to cross the 10 percent threshold and ended up with 59 seats compared to 13 percent and 80 seats in June.<sup>7</sup>

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## 6. Factors implicated in harassment of HDP

### 6.1 Political/electoral motives

#### 6.1.1 In May 2015, Al-Monitor stated:

'Since the beginning of the election campaign [of June 2015], Demirtas has been continuously assailed by Erdogan and Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu... The AKP is firing all its big guns at the HDP and Demirtas in an attempt to push it below the 10% threshold. If the HDP remains below 10%, the AKP will get more than 50 parliament members more than it deserves as a result of the intricacies of the Turkish electoral system. This can give Erdogan the necessary parliamentary votes to achieve his plans for the presidential system...

'The escalation of harassment against HDP members has occurred against such a background. It seems that those who conducted the anti-Demirtas and anti-HDP campaigns — including [Prime Minister] Davutoglu and [Deputy Prime Minister] Akdogan — did not anticipate the dangerous levels it could reach, condemning Adana and Mersin to being attacked....' The article further noted that '...[figures from the pre-election polls] explain the increasing nervousness on the part of AKP authorities and the increasing harassment against the HDP.'<sup>8</sup>

- 6.1.2 See also [End of ceasefire with PKK and conflation of HDP with PKK](#) for further information on this subject.

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<http://www.refworld.org/docid/55fbc2c4.html> Date accessed: 7 January 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Middle East Forum. 'Backgrounder: Turkey's November 2015 election,' dated 11 November 2015. <http://www.meforum.org/5623/backgrounder-turkey-november-2015-election> Date accessed: 8 January 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Caucasus Edition; Journal of Conflict Transformation. 'Turkey – November 2015' (Internal politics), dated 1 December 2015. <http://caucasusedition.net/media-review/turkey-november-2015/> Date accessed: 8 January 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Al-Monitor. 'What do attacks on Turkey's pro-Kurdish party mean?' dated 19 May 2015. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/05/turkey-kurds-hdp-wild-card-bombing-attacks.html?jsessionid=218BF67E94D2ED31ED324FC10AD17020#> Date accessed: 8 January 2016.

## 6.2 End of ceasefire with PKK and conflation of HDP with PKK

### 6.2.1 Today's Zaman reported the following in December 2015:

'Violence has escalated sharply since the cease-fire between the PKK and Turkey's security forces ended in late July [2015], with the PKK stepping up attacks on security forces in the Southeast. Since the settlement process -- launched in late-2012 between the government and the PKK to end Turkey's long-standing Kurdish problem -- ended, about 200 members of the security forces have been killed in clashes and attacks, curfews have been imposed in 17 southeastern districts and nearly 200,000 residents have been forced to leave their homes.

'The security forces are conducting large-scale operations in the Southeast to remove trenches dug by terrorists on streets in several southeastern towns. Intense clashes are taking place daily during the ongoing operations in the region.'<sup>9</sup>

### 6.2.2 Al-Jazeera reported as follows on the situation for the HDP in view of the ending of the ceasefire with the PKK: 'Growing tension has forced HDP co-chair Selahattin Demirtas, who campaigned on a platform of peace, to navigate a political minefield of pressure from the government and growing discontent among his party. At the same time, Demirtas is also trying to distance his party from the PKK and its acts of violence...

'The deepening crisis poses the biggest challenge yet to the Kurds' political future in Turkey, according to Henri Barkey, director of the Middle East Program at the DC-based Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars.

"The government is trying to put the HDP on the defensive in the case of fresh elections, by associating them as much as possible with the PKK, launching lawsuits and using the media to take them down a few pegs," said Barkey. "The HDP runs the risk of getting crowded out from the political debate, especially in light of government pressure on the media not to report on them. What you're seeing is essentially a policy of isolation."

'With hostilities escalating, Demirtas earlier this month urged both sides [the government and the PKK] to return to peace...But that message may be falling on deaf ears, with some analysts suggesting that Kurdish political leaders are increasingly at odds with the Kurdish armed groups.

'While Ocalan, the PKK leader, continues to exert influence over much of the Kurdish movement, he has been isolated in his prison cell since April and unable to communicate with the outside world. Although the HDP has

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<sup>9</sup> Today's Zaman. 'HDP mayor, 24 others detained in Mersin over alleged bid rigging,' dated 18 December 2015. [http://www.todayszaman.com/anasayfa\\_hdp-mayor-24-others-detained-in-mersin-over-alleged-bid-rigging\\_407330.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/anasayfa_hdp-mayor-24-others-detained-in-mersin-over-alleged-bid-rigging_407330.html) Date accessed: 3 February 2016.

communication links with the PKK, sources say the party has little, if any, influence over its fighters.

‘According to Soli Ozel, a professor of international relations at Kadir Has University in Istanbul, the HDP's political success in June elections - in which it secured 13 percent of the vote to win 80 seats in parliament - potentially undercuts the PKK, while its fighters' growing number of attacks within Turkey are threatening to turn voters away from the pro-Kurdish party.

“The HDP is literally between a rock and a hard place,” Ozel told Al Jazeera. “Demirtas hasn't moved fast enough to distance himself from the PKK, and I think he will be forced to take a more radical position against them. At the same time, the PKK with its brutality is also showing that they don't like the high profile Demirtas has. The civilian wing of the Kurdish political movement is now in the Turkish parliament, which potentially takes the initiative away from the PKK.”<sup>10</sup>

6.2.3 Human Rights Watch noted the following in an article dated September 2015: ‘The attacks on the party offices as well as on Kurdish neighbourhoods in different towns are inextricably linked to Erdogan's concerted post-election smear campaign against the party and its leader, Selahattin Demirtaş, accusing them of being terrorists - smears for which the horrific PKK attacks on police and soldiers are now being used to provide a convenient justification.’<sup>11</sup>

6.2.4 The US Congressional Research Service noted the following in November 2015:

‘A number of attacks on HDP political offices, as part of mass demonstrations, took place in apparent reprisal for PKK actions. Some HDP offices were also attacked prior to the June elections. Theories about who provoked these reprisals focused on Turkish nationalist groups, with some commentators claiming that Erdogan may have provided partial incitement with public statements conflating the HDP with the PKK.’<sup>12</sup>

6.2.5 In October 2015, Middle East Eye noted that, ‘The root of much of the HDP's problems stems from a common perception that they represent a legal parliamentary outgrowth of the PKK - described by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan as an “inorganic” link - due to their support of Kurdish national aspirations and their alleged veneration of PKK founder Abdullah Ocalan.

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<sup>10</sup> Al-Jazeera. ‘End of Turkey-PKK ceasefire puts HDP in a tough spot,’ dated 10 August 2015. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/08/turkey-pkk-ceasefire-puts-hdp-tough-spot-150806110231827.html> Date accessed: 3 February 2016.

<sup>11</sup> Human Rights Watch. ‘Turkey: media crackdown amid escalating violence,’ dated 11 September 2015. Available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/55f69d7a4.html> Date accessed: 13 January 2016.

<sup>12</sup> United States Congressional Research Service. ‘Turkey: Background and U.S. Relations In Brief,’ dated 13 November 2015. R44000. Available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/5666950d4.html> Date accessed: 13 January 2016.

'As a result, among the public and the security services, acts of violence by the PKK have been collectively blamed on the HDP, despite calls by the latter for the restoration of the ceasefire and a cessation of hostilities on both sides.'<sup>13</sup>

6.2.6 See also [Political/electoral motives](#) for further information on this subject.

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### 6.3 Suruc bombing

6.3.1 The BBC News website reported as below on the Suruc bombing on 20 July 2015, which had repercussions for HDP members and supporters:

'A bomb attack in the Turkish town of Suruc has killed at least 30 people during a meeting of young activists to discuss the reconstruction of the neighbouring Syrian town of Kobane [a mainly Kurdish town]. Around 100 others were wounded in the explosion... officials say. Kobane has seen heavy fighting between IS militants and Kurdish fighters. It was retaken by the Kurds from IS forces earlier this year.

'The Federation of Socialist Youth Associations (SGDF) is reported to have had at least 300 members staying at the Amara Culture Centre in Suruc, where the explosion happened. The young people had been planning to travel to Kobane to help with rebuilding the town...

'Suruc residents had feared that they could be IS's next target ever since the attack on the pro-Kurdish party's election rally in Diyarbakir on 5 June, he said. Suruc houses many refugees who have fled the fighting in Kobane.'<sup>14</sup>

6.3.2 The New York Times reported on 22 July 2015 that the person responsible for the Suruc bombing had been identified: 'The suicide bomber... has been identified as a Turkish citizen who is believed to have had ties to the Islamic State, a senior government official said Wednesday. The bomber, Seyh Abdurrahman Alagoz, a 20-year-old university student who had recently returned from Syria, was identified through DNA testing... "The investigation is ongoing, but we have evidence that the suspect was linked to Daesh," the official said...'<sup>15</sup>

6.3.3 The New York Times added that two policemen had been killed by the military wing of the PKK in revenge for the Suruc bombing, with the PKK claiming that the Turkish authorities were in collaboration with IS. Again, this had repercussions for supporters and members of the HDP.

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<sup>13</sup> Middle East Eye. 'Security concerns overshadow buildup to Turkish vote,' dated 29 October 2015. <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/elections-loom-turkey-hdp-fear-security-their-supporters-1276687814> Date accessed: 13 January 2016.

<sup>14</sup> BBC News. 'Suruc massacre: At least 30 killed in Turkey border blast,' dated 20 July 2015. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-33593615> Date accessed: 2 February 2016.

<sup>15</sup> NYTimes. 'Suicide Bomber in Suruc is said to be a Turk with possible ties to IS,' dated 22 July 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/23/world/europe/turkey-suruc-bombing.html> Date accessed: 2 February 2016.

'Separately, two police officers were shot and killed in their homes in the border town of Ceylanpinar on Wednesday, the district governor said. Responsibility for the attack was claimed by a military organization affiliated with the Kurdistan Workers' Party, or P.K.K., a Kurdish separatist group that is in a fragile peace process with the Turkish government after a 30-year conflict that claimed over 40,000 lives. The group, the People's Defense Forces, said on its website that the attack was in retaliation for "the massacre in Suruc." It also accused the police of cooperating with jihadists.'<sup>16</sup>

- 6.3.4 In August 2015, IRIN noted, 'The HDP estimates that more than 1,000 of its members have been detained as Erdogan has cracked down since the Suruc bombing [July 2015] which targeted its supporters but was widely blamed on ISIS.'<sup>17</sup>

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## 7. Violence related to elections of June and November 2015

### 7.1 Attacks on HDP offices and bureaus

- 7.1.1 In May 2015, Al-Monitor reported on harassment of the HDP party in the run-up to the June 2015 elections: 'At the end of last week, social media reported that 122 attacks had targeted HDP election offices and bureaus in 60 of Turkey's 81 provinces, or three-fourths of the country...

'The harassment reached its most dangerous level at the beginning of this week [commencing 18 May 2015]. On May 18 [2015], simultaneous bomb attacks hit the party's bureaus in the Mediterranean cities of Adana and Mersin. Adana is the fourth-largest city in Turkey and Mersin is among the top 10; both have large Kurdish populations. The bombs devastated HDP offices and wounded three people, one seriously. The Mersin incident miraculously spared the life of the highly popular chairman of the party, Selahattin Demirtas, and other officials as the explosion went off a few minutes before Demirtas' expected arrival. It could therefore be interpreted as an attempt on Demirtas' life...'<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> NYTimes. 'Suicide Bomber in Suruc is said to be a Turk with possible ties to IS,' dated 22 July 2015. <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/23/world/europe/turkey-suruc-bombing.html> Date accessed: 2 February 2016.

<sup>17</sup> Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN). 'Fact check: Is Turkey using ISIS as an excuse to fight the Kurds?,' dated 11 August 2015. Available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/55cb13c74.html> Date accessed: 13 January 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Al-Monitor. 'What do attacks on Turkey's pro-Kurdish party mean?' dated 19 May 2015. <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/05/turkey-kurds-hdp-wild-card-bombing-attacks.html?jsessionid=218BF67E94D2ED31ED324FC10AD17020#> Date accessed: 8 January 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Human Rights Watch. 'Turkey: media crackdown amid escalating violence,' dated 11 September 2015. Available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/55f69d7a4.html> Date accessed: 13 January 2016.

7.1.2 Reporting on attacks on the HDP's bureaus in Adana and Mersin, the BBC news website stated: 'Nationalists who accuse the HDP of links to the banned Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) are suspected of being behind the two explosions. However, an HDP statement spoke of "dark forces supported by the political authorities", and laid the blame with the president, prime minister and other figures in the AK party.

'The pro-Kurdish party's offices were targeted by armed attackers in the capital Ankara last month [April 2015] but no-one was hurt.'<sup>19</sup>

7.1.3 In September 2015, Human Rights Watch noted that, 'The dizzying speed of Turkey's descent into violence is not getting the media coverage it deserves. With the second attack on Hürriyet came a huge assault on the political opposition, with crowds across the country attacking hundreds of offices of the pro-Kurdish left-leaning Peoples' Democracy Party (HDP), which won 13 percent of the vote in the June general election...'<sup>20</sup> On 9 September 2015, The Telegraph reported that Selahattin Demirtas, leader of the HDP, stated, "'In the last two days more than 400 attacks on HDP property have been carried out... We are facing a campaign of lynching.'"<sup>21</sup>

7.1.4 In October 2015, Middle East Eye stated 'Both prior to the election and after the collapse of the ceasefire, HDP offices were subjected to ransacking by far-right street gangs.

'Members of the ultra-nationalist Grey Wolves - a paramilitary movement linked to the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) - and the Ottoman Hearths, an AKP-linked street movement, are thought to have been among the main instigators of the attacks.

'Over the space of five days in early September - following the deaths of 14 police officers in a Kurdish militant attack - over 130 HDP buildings were attacked, with many burnt out and Turkish flags hung from the windows. In other areas, Kurds and Kurdish businesses were assaulted, with one man reported to have been forced to kiss a bust of Turkey's founder Mustafa Kemal Atatürk on camera.'<sup>22</sup>

7.1.5 A report by Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), dated November 2015, stated:

'According to data provided to the OSCE/ODIHR LEOM [Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe / Office for Democratic Institutions and

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<sup>19</sup> BBC News. 'Turkey twin blasts target pro-Kurdish HDP party,' dated 18 May 2015.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-32781262> Date accessed: 1 February 2016.

<sup>20</sup> Human Rights Watch. 'Turkey: media crackdown amid escalating violence,' dated 11 September 2015. Available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/55f69d7a4.html> Date accessed: 13 January 2016.

<sup>21</sup> The Telegraph. 'Fears of civil war as mobs attack Kurdish targets in Turkey,' dated 9 September 2015. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/active/11854390/Fears-of-civil-war-as-mobs-attack-Kurdish-targets-in-Turkey.html> Date accessed: 11 January 2016.

<sup>22</sup> Middle East Eye. 'Security concerns overshadow buildup to Turkish vote,' dated 29 October 2015. <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/elections-loom-turkey-hdp-fear-security-their-supporters-1276687814> Date accessed: 13 January 2016.

Human Rights Limited Election Observation Mission] by the HDP 129 attacks on its party offices occurred between 6 September and 9 October [2015]. According to data provided by the Mol the following attacks occurred against party offices in October: the AKP 9, the HDP 7 and the CHP 1.’<sup>23</sup>

- 7.1.6 Bianet reported on attacks against the HDP on 8 September 2015: ‘In different provinces of Turkey, Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP) headquarters were attacked. HDP İstanbul provincial organization told via its twitter account that 126 HDP headquarters were attacked:

#### **‘Ankara**

‘In Beypazarı district of Ankara, a group of people attacked Kurds and set fire some apartments and cars. Two police officers got injured. 5 people got wounded and were taken to Beypazarı State Hospital.

#### **‘Tekirdağ**

‘In Çorlu district of Tekirdağ, approximately 6 thousand people put down the party signboard and displayed the Turkish flag. The crowd tried to lynch HDP Tekirdağ Co-Chair Şehnaz Kaya.

#### **‘Balıkesir**

‘A group of people ruined HDP headquarters in Balıkesir province and battered deputy candidate Bedri Arık. They shouted slogans “How happy is he who says I’m a Turk!”, (a proverb of Atatürk). The crowd threw the goods from HDP headquarters into the street and set fire the party flags.

#### **‘İzmir**

‘In Dikili district of İzmir province, a group of people broke the glasses of HDP headquarters and put down the HDP flag and displayed Turkish flag instead.

#### **‘İstanbul**

‘In Bağcılar district of İstanbul, 500 people marched against HDP headquarters. The group sang National Anthem and attacked the HDP’s building. In Üsküdar district, the crowd was saying Allahu Akbar while attacking HDP’s building.

#### **‘Mersin**

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<sup>23</sup> Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). ‘Turkey, Early Parliamentary Elections, 1 November 2015: Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions,’ (page 8, footnote 33), dated 2 November 2015 <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/turkey/196351?download=true> Date accessed: 14 January 2016.

'The crowd attacked Kurdish tradesmen and then municipality buses in Erdemli district.

## 'Erzurum

'In Aşkale district, Kurdish construction workers were attacked by perpetrators.'<sup>24</sup>

- 7.1.7 In their November 2015 Alternative Country Report to the UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the Association for Monitoring Equal Rights (AMER) and the Migrants' Association for Social Cooperation and Culture (İstanbul-GöçDer) provided a [list of attacks](#) on the HDP between 1 May and 30 October 2015.<sup>25</sup>

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## 7.2 Attacks on HDP rallies

- 7.2.1 On 5 June 2015, Today's Zaman reported on a bomb attack on an HDP rally in Diyarbakir:

'At least two people were killed and more than 200 people were hospitalized Friday [5 June 2015] after two explosions five minutes apart disrupted a Kurdish party election rally in southeast Turkey attended by thousands of people, witnesses and reports said. The explosions occurred at the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP) final election rally in Diyarbakir - the main city in Turkey's predominantly Kurdish southeast - as the party's leader Selahattin Demirtaş was preparing to address the crowd...

'Eyewitness Guy Martin, a British photographer, told Reuters the blasts occurred some five minutes apart - the first in a rubbish bin which was ripped apart and the second in front a power generator. In the aftermath he saw one person who had lost a leg and others with shrapnel wounds. "The police started firing teargas at people who were helping the injured or fleeing the scene this enflamed the situation," he added. "The mood is angry. People want revenge."...

'Security has been tight at HDP political rallies as tensions run high ahead of Sunday's election. On Thursday, a riot erupted in the northern town of Erzurum as nationalists clashed with HDP supporters at a Demirtaş rally. Demirtaş has said his party has been the target of more than 70 violent attacks during the campaign.

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<sup>24</sup> Bianet. 'Attacks against HDP in provinces of Turkey,' dated 8 September 2015. <http://bianet.org/english/people/167451-attacks-against-hdp-in-provinces-of-turkey> Date accessed: 11 January 2016.

<sup>25</sup> Association for Monitoring Equal Rights (AMER) and the Migrants' Association for Social Cooperation and Culture (İstanbul-GöçDer). Alternative Country Report to CERD (Annex 3), dated 2 November 2015. [http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CERD/Shared%20Documents/TUR/INT\\_CERD\\_NGO\\_TUR\\_22236\\_E.pdf](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CERD/Shared%20Documents/TUR/INT_CERD_NGO_TUR_22236_E.pdf) Date accessed: 19 February 2016

'President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said the blasts were a "provocation" designed to undermine peace before Sunday's parliamentary election. In a written statement expressing sadness over the incident and condolences for the victims, Erdoğan said state authorities were conducting the investigation into the incident sensitively.'<sup>26</sup>

- 7.2.2 Today's Zaman reported on 13 June 2015 that the death toll from the bomb attack at the HDP rally in Diyarbakir had risen to four. The article added: 'One person was arrested in connection with the attack, although authorities have made no statement on the suspect's identity or motives. HDP Co-Chairman Selahattin Demirtaş has claimed that the attack was linked to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

'In a statement on Friday, Demirtaş also warned against new attempts to fuel tension in the southeastern Anatolia and said dozens of ISIL cells were awaiting orders to launch attacks across Turkey.'<sup>27</sup>

- 7.2.3 The BBC News website reported on 10 October 2015 on explosions at a peace rally in Ankara:

'Two explosions at a peace rally in the Turkish capital Ankara have killed at least 95 people and injured 245, according to officials. TV footage showed scenes of panic and people lying on the ground covered in blood, amid protest banners. The blasts took place near the city's central train station as people gathered for a march organised by leftist groups. The attack is the deadliest ever of its kind on Turkish soil.

'Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu has announced three days of national mourning, and said there was evidence that two suicide bombers had carried out the attacks. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said the attack, which comes three weeks before a re-run of June's inconclusive parliamentary elections, was an act of terrorism and was "loathsome". He has cancelled a planned visit to Turkmenistan.

'The rally was demanding an end to the violence between the Kurdish separatist PKK militants and the Turkish government, and had been due to start at 12:00 local time. The pro-Kurdish HDP party was among those attending, and it said in a statement that it believes its members were the main target of the bombings. HDP leader Selahattin Demirtaş has blamed the state for the attack and has cancelled all election rallies. Mr Demirtaş angrily condemned the government as "murderers" and said it had blood on its hands. The party has previously blamed the government for colluding in attacks on Kurdish activists, which the government denies...

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<sup>26</sup> Today's Zaman. 'Two killed in bomb blasts at HDP rally in Diyarbakir,' dated 5 June 2015. [http://www.todayszaman.com/anasayfa\\_two-killed-in-bomb-blasts-at-hdp-rally-in-diyarbakir\\_383363.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/anasayfa_two-killed-in-bomb-blasts-at-hdp-rally-in-diyarbakir_383363.html) Date accessed: 1 February 2016.

<sup>27</sup> Today's Zaman. 'Death toll from bomb blast at HDP rally rises to 4,' dated 13 June 2015. [http://www.todayszaman.com/anasayfa\\_death-toll-from-bomb-blasts-at-hdp-rally-rises-to-4\\_386023.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/anasayfa_death-toll-from-bomb-blasts-at-hdp-rally-rises-to-4_386023.html) Date accessed: 1 February 2016.

'Bulent Tekdemir, who was at the rally, told the BBC that the police used tear gas "as soon as the bomb went off", and "would not let ambulances through". A local resident said that angry people tried to attack police cars after the blast. The HDP tweeted that police "attacked" people carrying the injured away.'<sup>28</sup>

- 7.2.4 Daily Sabah reported in October 2015 that one of the suicide bombers responsible for the Ankara bombing had been identified:

'Ankara Public Prosecutor's Office confirmed in a statement on Monday that one of the suicide bombers in the horrific Ankara bombing was identified as an ISIS-linked terrorist named Yunus Emre Alagöz. The DNA tests also revealed that Alagöz was the brother of Şeyh Abdurrahman Alagöz, the suspected suicide bomber who carried out the deadly Suruç bombing that killed 33 people and wounded more than 100 on July 20... The Office also implied that the bombers came from Syria, saying that they were from a "neighboring country in the south."<sup>29</sup>

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## 8. Arrest, detention and investigation of HDP supporters

- 8.1.1 The US Department of State's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, which covered the year 2014 and were published in June 2015, stated:

'The HRA [Human Rights Association, a domestic NGO] asserted there were hundreds of political prisoners from across the political spectrum, including journalists, political party officials, and academics. The government stated that those persons were charged with being members of, or assisting, terrorist organizations. Despite new limits on the use of the antiterror law provided by the Fourth and Fifth Judicial Packages, prosecutors continued to use a broad definition of terrorism and threats to national security. The law still does not distinguish between persons who incited violence, those who are alleged to have supported the use of violence but did not use it themselves, and those who rejected violence but sympathized with some or all of the philosophical goals of various political movements.

'According to the Ministry of Justice, as of August 18, there were 930 persons in detention and 4,889 in prison on terrorism charges.'<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> BBC News. 'Ankara explosions leave almost 100 dead - officials,' dated 10 October 2015. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-34495161> Date accessed: 1 February 2016.

<sup>29</sup> Daily Sabah. 'Ankara suicide bomber identified as brother of suspected attacker in Suruc bombing,' dated 19 October 2015. <http://www.dailysabah.com/investigations/2015/10/19/ankara-suicide-bomber-identified-as-brother-of-suspected-attacker-in-suruc-bombing> Date accessed: 2 February 2016.

<sup>30</sup> US Department of State. 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014,' published June 2015 (Turkey; Section 1e; Political Prisoners and Detainees). <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2014&dliid=236586> Date accessed: 13 January 2016.

8.1.2 In September 2015, Minority Rights Group International stated: 'Since the elections [of June 2015], the human rights commission of HDP claims that 1620 members of the party have been detained. They include co-mayors from the towns of Hakkari, Sur, Silvan and Edremit, village headmen, members of district and provincial branches of HDP, minors, and students.'<sup>31</sup>

8.1.3 In October 2015, Middle East Eye stated, 'Since the collapse of the ceasefire [between the government and the PKK in July 2015], the southeast of Turkey has seen major operations by Turkish security services, with scores of local HDP mayors and hundreds of activists reportedly languishing in prisons.

'HDP spokespeople have claimed that over 1,400 members of the HDP and its sister Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) have been detained while 220 have been formally arrested...'<sup>32</sup>

8.1.4 In January 2016, RT news reported:

'Turkish police have raided an Istanbul office of the pro-Kurdish opposition party HDP and arbitrarily detained several senior officials... The arrests come as President Erdogan called for legal action against the party's members. Five members of the left-wing pro-minority Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) were detained in a police raid on one of its offices in Istanbul, according to party representatives. Special forces reportedly took part in the raid. Among those arrested was HDP Beyoglu branch Co-chair Rukiye Demir...'<sup>33</sup>

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## 8.2 Alleged links between HDP and PKK

8.2.1 In its World Report 2016 Human Rights Watch stated, 'Starting in July, authorities launched a new wave of investigations into hundreds of Kurdish political party officials and activists, including mayors, detaining many on terrorism charges, including in cases where the evidence consisted of non-violent political association and involvement in peaceful protests or press conferences...'<sup>34</sup>

8.2.2 TRT World reported in September 2015 on the arrest of HDP members accused of belonging to the PKK: 'A Turkish court on Saturday ordered the

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<sup>31</sup> Minority Rights Group International. 'Concerned by ongoing violence in Turkey, MRG urges peaceful resolution to crisis,' dated 15 September 2015. Available via Refworld website: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/55fbcb2c4.html> Date accessed: 7 January 2016.

<sup>32</sup> Middle East Eye. 'Security concerns overshadow buildup to Turkish vote,' dated 29 October 2015. <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/elections-loom-turkey-hdp-fear-security-their-supporters-1276687814> Date accessed: 13 January 2016.

<sup>33</sup> RT News. 'Turkish police arrest pro-Kurdish opposition politicians in raid on HDP party HQ,' dated 8 January 2016 <https://www.rt.com/news/328311-turkey-raid-hdp-arrests/> Date accessed: 19 February 2016

<sup>34</sup> Human Rights Watch. World Report 2016; Turkey, 27 January 2016. Available at: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/01/27/world-report-2016-politics-fear-threatens-rights> Date accessed: 18 February 2016

arrest for three suspects, including Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) Varto district co-head, Halide Akay on charges of "being a member of a terrorist organisation" and "aiding and abetting a terrorist organisation" in Turkey's southeastern province Mus.

'According to security sources, Varto district anti-terror teams, belonging to the Mus police department detained the trio (Akay, her husband Ali Dogan Akay and Murat Guler) on Friday. Murat Guler, who is the official driver of Varto district co-head, Sabite Ekinci is suspected of being a member of the outlawed PKK's youth branch, the YPG-H, and to have participated in illegal demonstrations.

'Speaking to TRT World, political analyst Galip Dalay, made comments about the heavily debated HDP-PKK relationship, saying that "the PKK is at the top of the interior hierarchy of power."<sup>35</sup>

8.2.3 ARA News, an independent Syrian press agency, reported the following on 30 December 2015:

'Turkish security arrested on Tuesday nine Kurdish politicians and members of the Democratic Peoples' Party (HDP) in Izmir province. The Turkish authorities accused the HDP members of supporting the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) – which is in conflict with the Turkish army in the Kurdish region southeast the country [sic]. Turkish state media reported that the arrested Kurdish politicians had raised pro-PKK slogans during a protest in Izmir. Dozens of HDP supporters protested in the western province of Izmir against the ongoing military campaign by the Turkish army troops across the Kurdish region.'<sup>36</sup>

8.2.4 Today's Zaman reported the following in December 2015: '...Interior Minister Efkân Ala said the number of HDP mayors who have been dismissed since late July [2015] is 18. He said the mayors had been dismissed on the grounds that they allowed PKK-affiliated Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (YDG-H) terrorists to use municipal equipment while digging trenches in southeastern towns that are predominantly Kurdish.

"Administrative investigations have been launched against 18 mayors so far. All of them were dismissed, and some of them were arrested," Ala stated.'<sup>37</sup>

8.2.5 Reuters reported as follows in January 2016: 'Turkish police detained six people including local officials from the pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (HDP) on Friday in a raid on one of its Istanbul offices, days after President Tayyip Erdoğan said he backed legal action against its members.

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<sup>35</sup> TRT World. 'HDP district co-head arrested in Turkey's southeast,' dated 19 September 2015. <http://www.trtworld.com/turkey/hdp-district-co-head-arrested-in-turkeys-southeast-8122> Date accessed: 3 February 2016.

<sup>36</sup> ARA News. 'Turkey arrests nine Kurdish politicians for condemning military campaign,' dated 30 December 2015. <http://aranews.net/2015/12/17318/> Date accessed: 3 February 2016.

<sup>37</sup> Today's Zaman. 'HDP mayor, 24 others detained in Mersin over alleged bid rigging,' dated 18 December 2015. [http://www.todayszaman.com/anasayfa\\_hdp-mayor-24-others-detained-in-mersin-over-alleged-bid-rigging\\_407330.html](http://www.todayszaman.com/anasayfa_hdp-mayor-24-others-detained-in-mersin-over-alleged-bid-rigging_407330.html) Date accessed: 3 February 2016.

'Riot police and special forces took part in the operation, according to the state-run Anadolu Agency, which said the action was part of a crackdown on urban networks of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militant group's youth wing. Erdogan and the government accuse the HDP, parliament's third-biggest party, of being an extension of the PKK, which has fought a three-decade insurgency for greater Kurdish autonomy in the southeast and which is considered a terrorist group by Turkey, the United States and the European Union. HDP says it is opposed to violence and wants a peaceful solution for Turkey's Kurds.

'The detentions come less than 48 hours after Erdogan said some HDP lawmakers and local mayors were behaving like members of a terrorist organization and that their positions should not shield them from prosecution.

'Istanbul police said in a statement that the operation was part of an investigation into a June 2015 murder suspected to have been carried out by PKK members and was based on a tip-off that the murder weapon was in the HDP building.'<sup>38</sup>

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### 8.3 Autonomy for Kurds

8.3.1 A report by Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), dated November 2015, stated:

'More than 20 mayors, who are members of the Democratic Regions Party, affiliated to the HDP at the national level, were suspended by the Minister of Interior due to criminal investigations for infringing the territorial integrity and unity of the state. According to data provided to the OSCE/ODIHR LEOM [Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe / Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights Limited Election Observation Mission] by the HDP: 2,590 HDP members were taken into custody and 630 were arrested between 20 July and 18 October [2015].'<sup>39</sup>

8.3.2 In August 2015, the news website on TRT World gave the reasons for the arrest of five mayors: 'On Sunday, eight suspects including five district mayors in the southern province of Hakkari were detained and then arrested following declaring "autonomy" in their regions. Hakkari co-mayors Dilek Hatipoglu and Nurullah Ciftci from the HDP were arrested after standing trial over threatening the unity.

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<sup>38</sup> Reuters. 'Turkish police detain pro-Kurdish opposition members in Istanbul raid,' dated 8 January 2016. <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-kurds-idUSKBN0UM0XV20160108> Date accessed: 3 February 2016.

<sup>39</sup> Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). 'Turkey, Early Parliamentary Elections, 1 November 2015: Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions,' (page 8, footnote 33), dated 2 November 2015 <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/turkey/196351?download=true> Date accessed: 14 January 2016.

'In the past week, mayors of Sur and Silvan districts of southeastern province of Diyarbakir were arrested after making declarations regarding "autonomy" after which the Chief Prosecution Office of Diyarbakir launched an investigation. Sur district mayor Seyid Narin and Silvan district mayor Yuksel Bodakci were arrested with charges of disrupting the unity and territorial integrity of the state along with five others from Democratic Regions Party (DRP).

'DRP branches off from HDP and is responsible for local organisation while HDP is active on the national political scene.'<sup>40</sup>

- 8.3.3 The Journal of Turkish Weekly reported as follows on 4 January 2016: 'The Kurdish problem-focused Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) is planning to hold rallies in favor of "autonomy" and "self-rule" before the end of January [2016], at a time when one of its co-chairs is being investigated over his call for greater Kurdish self-governance...

'HDP co-chair Selahattin Demirtaş was one of the participants in a two-day congress of Kurdish groups that called for more self-governance, during which he said "there will be a Kurdistan in the next century and it could include an independent state." A prosecutor opened an investigation into Demirtaş on Dec. 28 [2015] over his call, while President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan also said over the weekend that he supports criminal probes into HDP leaders over their comments about self-rule.'<sup>41</sup>

- 8.3.4 Middle East Eye noted that 'On October 23 [2015], the HDP claimed that a local court in Agri province had banned the HDP's election manifesto due to its references to "administrative self-rule".'<sup>42</sup> A report by Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), dated November 2015, stated that 'On 16 October [2015], a Criminal Judge of Peace ordered the confiscation of the [HDP's campaign] leaflet which referred to "decentralised government" as criminal evidence in an investigation under the Anti-Terrorism Law.'<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> TRT World. 'HDP district mayor in Van jailed for disrupting state unity,' dated 25 August 2015. <http://www.trtworld.com/turkey/hdp-district-mayor-in-van-jailed-for-disrupting-state-unity-6664> Date accessed: 3 February 2016.

<sup>41</sup> The Journal of Turkish Weekly. 'Turkey's HDP plans to hold "autonomy" rallies amid tension with gov't over self-rule policy,' dated 4 January 2016. <http://www.turkishweekly.net/2016/01/04/news/turkey-s-hdp-plans-to-hold-autonomy-rallies-amid-tension-with-gov-t-over-self-rule-policy/> Date accessed: 8 January 2016.

<sup>42</sup> Middle East Eye. 'Security concerns overshadow build-up to Turkish vote,' dated 29 October 2015. <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/elections-loom-turkey-hdp-fear-security-their-supporters-1276687814> Date accessed: 13 January 2016.

<sup>43</sup> Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). 'Turkey, Early Parliamentary Elections, 1 November 2015: Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions' (page 8, footnote 33), dated 2 November 2015 <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/turkey/196351?download=true> Date accessed: 14 January 2016.

## 9. State protection

9.1.1 In September 2015, Human Rights Watch gave the following statement, following violence against the HDP: 'Mild government statements condemning violent attacks against media and political targets well after the event are insufficient. The government should make every effort to ensure acts of violence are fully investigated and those responsible brought to justice, and to send out a strong message that lynch mobs should not be part of Turkey's political culture.'<sup>44</sup>

9.1.2 In September 2015, Amnesty International stated:

'Amnesty International calls on the Turkish authorities to carry out prompt, thorough and impartial investigations into recent violent attacks by mobs targeting the leftist, Kurdish-rooted Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), Kurdish individuals and other groups and organizations for their perceived stance regarding the armed clashes between the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the Turkish security forces. Amnesty International is concerned by victims' reports that the police failed to provide adequate protection against the mobs during what were in many cases sustained attacks, and calls on the authorities to ensure that it upholds its obligations to protect the security of its citizens in the event of any further attacks and to ensure safe conditions for the peaceful exercise of the right to freedom of expression...

'On 8 September [2015], a mob attacked the HDP head office in Ankara, in a sustained attack, setting part of the building alight and causing major damage before being dispersed by the police. The Governor of Ankara province stated that a group of approximately 200 people took part in the attack. While one person was detained in connection with the incident, the HDP claimed that the police did not intervene adequately during the attack...

'On 7 and 9 September [2015], mobs attacked the Istanbul offices of daily Hürriyet, a newspaper that is critical of the government, after the President had condemned its coverage of his speech. According to media reports, six people were detained in relation to the attacks.

'According to the Ministry of the Interior, attacks across Turkey have resulted in the deaths of two citizens, injuries to 41 police officers and 51 members of the public and damage to 69 political party buildings, 30 homes and businesses and 8 vehicles. The Ministry of the Interior stated that 310 people have been detained in connection with the events. The HDP, who were the main target of the attacks, reported that over 400 attacks against their offices, Kurdish businesses and individuals took place on 7 and 8 September and that 126 of its offices were attacked in the first night of protests alone...

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<sup>44</sup> Human Rights Watch. 'Turkey: media crackdown amid escalating violence,' dated 11 September 2015. Available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/55f69d7a4.html> Date accessed: 13 January 2016.

'Amnesty International calls on the Turkish authorities, while respecting the right to peaceful assembly, to ensure that future demonstrations are policed effectively and that mob attacks are not allowed to occur...'<sup>45</sup>

- 9.1.3 TRT World, the news website of the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation, published the following article on 7 June 2015: 'Speaking after casting his vote in Sunday's Turkish general election, Turkey's Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu told reporters that a suspect has been detained over the blasts on a pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) rally in Turkey's southeastern province of Diyarbakir.

'Speaking to the press Davutoglu said "We cannot reveal [the suspect's] name at the moment for the sake of the investigation's security. We will get to the root of it. Whoever has done this, it is an attack on the democracy," Davutoglu added.

'More than 100 people injured and two died in the twin blasts which occurred during the election rally of the HDP in the Diyarbakir province on Friday.

'The blasts were harshly condemned by political leaders including Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and PM Davutoglu, being described as a "provocation attempt."<sup>46</sup>

- 9.1.4 Daily Sabah reported in October 2015 that one of the suicide bombers connected with the Ankara bombing had been identified. The article continued, 'An investigation into the deadly twin suicide bombings that killed over 100 and injured nearly 250 more people in Ankara continues, and the suicide bombers are believed to have links with ISIS. 13 people have been detained on suspicion of involvement with the attack so far and the investigation is underway.'<sup>47</sup>

- 9.1.5 The Hurriyet Daily News reported on 18 May 2015 that Culture Minister Ömer Çelik had condemned the attacks in Adana and Mersin, and said that a special unit had been formed with the Police, Gendarmerie and the National Intelligence Organization (MİT) to investigate the blasts.<sup>48</sup>

- 9.1.6 The Middle East Eye reported that a statement from the governor's office in Diyarbakir had stated that Selahattin Demirtas, leader of the HDP, had been

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<sup>45</sup> Amnesty International. 'Turkey: Investigate recent nationalist attacks' [EUR 44/2493/2015], dated 22 September 2015. Available at [ecoi.net](http://www.ecoi.net): [http://www.ecoi.net/file\\_upload/1226\\_1442991812\\_eur4424932015english.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/file_upload/1226_1442991812_eur4424932015english.pdf) Date accessed: 14 January 2016.

<sup>46</sup> TRT World. 'PM Davutoglu announces detention over HDP rally bombing,' dated 7 June 2015. <http://www.trtworld.com/turkey/pm-davutoglu-announces-detention-over-hdp-rally-bombing-2650> Date accessed: 20 January 2016

<sup>47</sup> Daily Sabah. 'Ankara suicide bomber identified as brother of suspected attacker in Suruc bombing,' dated 19 October 2015. <http://www.dailysabah.com/investigations/2015/10/19/ankara-suicide-bomber-identified-as-brother-of-suspected-attacker-in-suruc-bombing> Date accessed: 2 February 2016.

<sup>48</sup> Hurriyet Daily News. 'HDP, gov't in row over party office bombings in southern Turkey,' dated 18 May 2015. <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/hdp-govt-in-row-over-party-office-bombings-in-southern-turkey.aspx?PageID=238&NID=82580&NewsCatID=509> Date accessed: 1 February 2016.

given police protection throughout his stay in Diyarbakir [in November 2015].<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Middle East Eye. 'Turkey pro-Kurdish party says leader escapes assassination attempt,' dated 23 November 2015. <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/turkey-pro-kurdish-party-says-leader-escapes-assassination-attempt-1149077486> Date accessed: 13 January 2016.

# Version Control and Contacts

## Contacts

If you have any questions about the guidance and your line manager or senior caseworker cannot help you or you think that the guidance has factual errors then email [the Country Policy and Information Team](#).

If you notice any formatting errors in this guidance (broken links, spelling mistakes and so on) or have any comments about the layout or navigability of the guidance then you can email [the Guidance, Rules and Forms Team](#).

## Clearance

Below is information on when this version of the guidance was cleared:

- Version: **1.0**
- valid from: **29 March 2016**
- this version approved by: **Sally Weston, Deputy Director, IBPD**
- approved on: **24 March 2016**

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