

# CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN TURKEY



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## YOUNG CHILDREN BEHIND BARS

It was a snowy January morning in Istanbul last year when Ayse, a 32-year-old primary school teacher and mother of two, kissed the kids goodbye at school and headed home.

She didn't make it to her front door before she was surrounded by seven policemen, accused of membership in a terrorist organization, handcuffed and taken away. Two months after being jailed, Ayse was joined behind bars by her youngest son, Ali, then just 4 years old.

For another four months, she said, their lives unfolded like a horror movie. Built to hold 10 people, Ayse said, her cell was packed with 23 detainees. She remembers babies unable to get vaccines, and burning themselves with hot tea. She remembers, too, the traumatic cries at night.

The case of Ayse and Ali is hardly unique. By the end of August 2017, advocacy groups had highlighted some 668 cases of children under the age of 6 being held in jails with their mothers. And 23 percent of those youngsters were infants less than a year old.

Several thousand children between ages 6-18 are also being held.



## Erdogan Tells a Weeping Girl, 6, she'd Receive Honors if Martyred



## 113 CHILDREN TORTURED IN TURKISH PRISONS

Forty-nine children have been subjected to torture in Turkish prisons, while another 64 have been tortured in police custody, a leading Turkish human rights NGO stated in a report released to mark World Children's Day on Nov. 20.

The Human Rights Association (İHD) stressed that the figures only represent cases reported to activists and that many victims are hesitant to denounce officials for fear of facing retribution.

"Children are the utmost victims in terms of human rights violations," the İHD report said.



Other than denying passports to 76 infants, Turkish consulates have also refused to provide consular services 695 times, confiscated 19 passports and restricted the travel rights of 10 Gülen followers in the last three months.

## HUNDREDS OF YOUNG TURKISH CHILDREN JAILED ALONGSIDE THEIR MOMS AS PART OF A POST-COUP CRACKDOWN

According to the Justice Ministry, there are 669 children in Turkish jails, 64 percent of them under the age of three. Before Turkey introduced the state of emergency in the wake of the coup attempt, babies younger than six months were not put in prison alongside their mothers, but now even newborns are allowed in jail.

Turkey is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on Children's Rights. Article 3 of the convention says all administrative or legislative decisions concerning children should be in the best interests of the child.



But it is difficult to see, apart from being with their mothers, how being in prison is in the best interest of children. There is no regulation for the detained children. They grow up in sub-standard prison conditions and lack the most basic human necessities such as proper healthcare, nutrition, education, and time for play.

Due to overcrowded prisons, children have to sleep in the same bed with their mothers and are not assigned a cradle or separate bed.

## 76 NEWBORNS STATELESS AS PARENTS DENIED SERVICE AT TURKISH CONSULATES

Seventy-six babies have been born stateless in the last three months because Turkish diplomatic missions are denying consular services to people allegedly linked to the Gülen movement, which is accused by the ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party) and President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of masterminding a failed coup in 2016.

# REALIZING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN TURKEY

## POVERTY:

**17% of the Turkish population lives below the poverty line. This figure, while not alarming, nevertheless needs to be reduced—especially since the gap between rich and poor, along with the disparity between rural and urban areas, is widening. Many children from poor families are unable to benefit from the right to healthcare or to protection under the law as other children can and do.**

## RIGHT TO HEALTH:

**Reforms to the system have been put in place. Still, there are indicators that the health authorities need to do more. 11% of babies are born with dietary deficiencies and 20% of children die before the age of 5. Better medical equipment is needed and the overall competence of health personnel needs to improve so that patients' needs can be met effectively.**

## ABUSE AND MALTREATMENT

**Mistreatment of Turkish children remains a problem; and it takes various forms: physical, psychological, sexual. The worst form of violence is the honor killing. Numerous young girls, principally those living in rural areas, are the victims of ancestral rites and traditions. Babies and children under 6 are subjected to inhumane conditions in prisons. Additionally, hundreds of children between ages of 16 and 18 have been molested, raped, and tortured in custody.**



**FREEDOM  
FOR  
668  
BABIES**