

Kurdish Monitoring

Kurdish Language Rights Monitoring and Reporting Platform

Report on Systematic Violations Against Kurdish Language and Culture in Turkey

January - June

2025

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KURDISH MONITORING



About Kurdish Monitoring

Kurdish Monitoring is an independent initiative established to document and monitor systematic violations against Kurdish language and culture in Turkey and to release these violations to the public through regular reports. Based on the principle that linguistic pluralism is a fundamental human right, the platform aims to make visible the obstacles to the use of Kurdish in the public sphere and to conduct data-based advocacy against these violations.

Functioning and Objectives of the Platform

1. Data Collection

Violation records will be kept through open sources (official documents, court decisions, local and national media news).

Field data will be compiled in cooperation with non-governmental organisations (NGOs), lawyers and victims.

2. Reporting

Regular Reports: Comprehensive analyses will be published quarterly, semi-annually and annually.

Information Notes: In cases of urgent violations or important developments, rapid assessment texts will be prepared.

3. Advocacy

The reports will be submitted to national and international human rights organisations.

Awareness campaigns will be conducted among local governments, political parties, and the media.

Target Audience and Collaborations

Civil Society: Human rights organisations, language activists, academics.

Media: Local and national media, independent journalists.

International Organisations: UN Special Rapporteurs, The Council of Europe.

Public Opinion: Kurdish community and all language rights defenders in Turkey, legislative organ.

Final Goal

Kurdish Monitoring advocates for the constitutional assurance of the Kurdish language in Turkey, its use in the public sphere freely and the protection of Kurdish cultural heritage. With the belief that linguistic diversity is the foundation stone of democracy, it carries out a data-based struggle for a future where violations of Kurdish language rights end.

Current Situation of Kurdish Language Rights in Turkey

In Turkey, Kurdish language faces legal and de-facto obstacles.

Right to Education: The right to education in the mother tongue is not recognised in Turkey and is limited to elective courses and the opening of private educational institutions.

Kurdish language teacher appointments remain merely symbolic.

Culture and Arts: Theatre plays, concerts and literary works face arbitrary bans; actors/actresses, singers and writers are targeted.

Media and Communication: Newspapers, magazines, and social media accounts that publish in Kurdish are subjected to censorship and face access bans.

Public Space: Kurdish signs or warnings belonging to municipalities are removed, playing Kurdish music and dancing the Halay (Kurdish dance) at weddings is considered a "crime." MPs' speeches in Kurdish in the Parliament are interrupted, and their speeches are recorded as "unknown language" in the parliamentary minutes. Kurdish is prevented in areas like healthcare, the workplace, and other public spaces.

Prisons: Prisoners are prevented from communicating in Kurdish and their letters and books in Kurdish are confiscated. Prisoners who insist on speaking and writing in Kurdish are faced pressure from prison administrations, punished (such as through visitation bans, communication bans, etc.), and their sentences are extended.

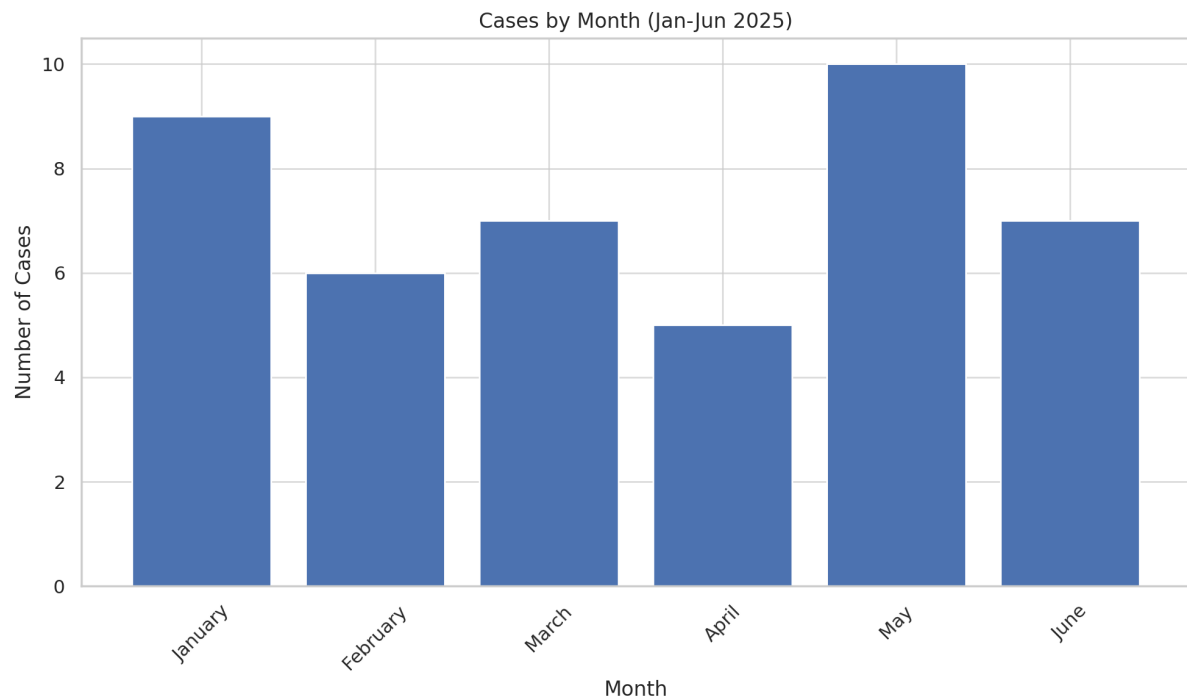
These practices contradict international conventions to which Turkey is a party, such as the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (Article 27) and the European Convention on Human Rights (Article 10).

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INTRODUCTION

In the first six months of 2025, monitoring activities documenting public, institutional, and cultural interventions against the Kurdish language once again revealed the systematic nature of linguistic discrimination. This report, prepared by Kurdish Monitoring, brings to public attention a total of 44 separate incidents that occurred between January and June 2025.



Distribution by Category:

- Public Sphere: 15
- Media: 8
- Culture and Arts: 12
- Prisons: 9

Distribution by Month:

- January: 9
- February: 6
- March: 7
- April: 5
- May: 10
- June: 7

These data reveal that, on average, an intervention against the Kurdish language occurred once every four days in the first half of the year.

Notable Examples:

- On March 8, Gebze Technical University banned a women's march on the grounds that Kurdish slogans might be chanted.
- The Jîn Art House was raided by police; books and computers were confiscated, and a Turkish flag was drawn on the chalkboard.
- VOA's Kurdish service ceased broadcasting after 33 years.
- A prisoner was penalized for possessing a Kurdish dictionary in Elazığ Prison; the Constitutional Court confirmed the violation.
- A prisoner was denied a jersey inscribed with "Hebûn," the Kurdish word for "existence."

Key Findings:

- Over 60% of the interventions were carried out by state institutions.
- 70% of incidents occurred in public spaces or in the scope of public services.
- One out of every four cases involved the censorship of expressions or symbols unique to Kurdish, under the pretext of "security."
- Access restrictions and censorship in the media domain continued to intensify, particularly in digital platforms.

International Dimension: The repression of the Kurdish language extended beyond Turkey's borders. In Japan, Kurdish artist Seyda Perinçek was deported after his concert was canceled. In Mannheim, Germany, a musician singing in Kurdish was physically assaulted.

Public Sphere

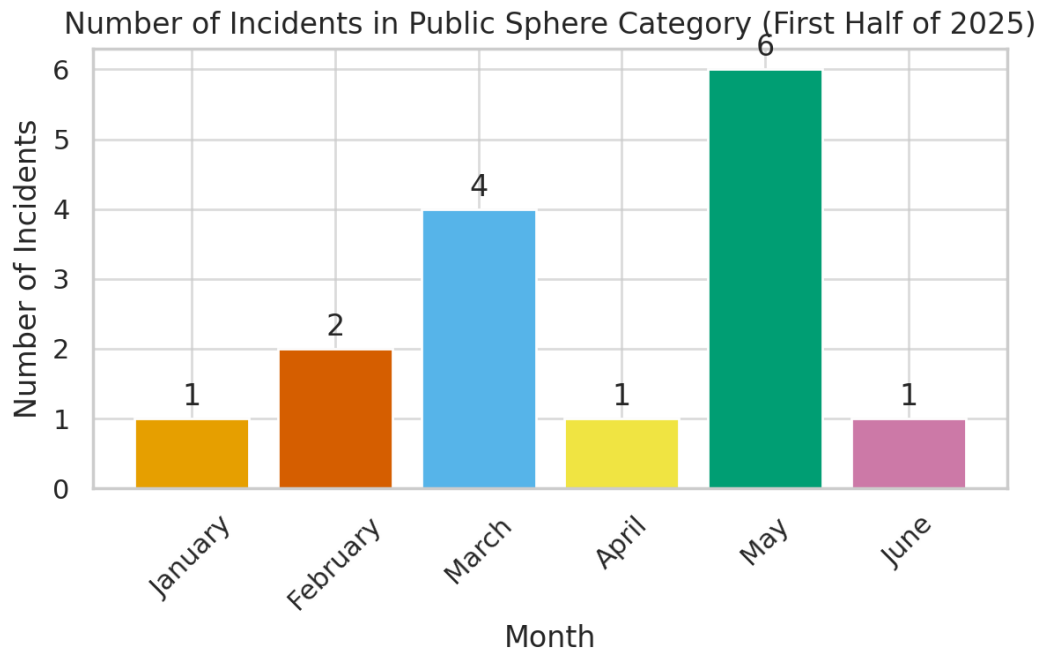
January

- Meral Daniş Beştaş, an MP from the DEM Party, stated that elective course forms at a middle school in Karaçoban district of Erzurum were improperly arranged, preventing students from choosing Kurdish (in Kurmancî and Zazakî) and other languages as elective courses.

March

- A group of 20 female students at Gebze Technical University was prevented by the administration from holding a march for International Women's Day on March 8, citing concerns that they might chant slogans or carry placards in Kurdish.

- DEM Party MP Gülderen Varlı was cut off during a speech in the General Assembly of the Parliament when she mentioned Jina Emînî, who was murdered in Iran, on



the assumption that she was about to speak in Kurdish. The phrase “Jin Jiyan Azadî” was not recorded in the official parliamentary minutes.

- A banner prepared by Amedspor fans for the match against Sakaryaspor reading “They Will Ignore You,” written in both Kurdish and Turkish, was banned due to the Kurdish text. It was later permitted.
- A Kurdish banner held during a protest in Konya against the detention of Ekrem İmamoğlu was taken down following reactions from some demonstrators.
- A banner reading “Hûn bi xêr hatin fitara me / Welcome to our iftar,” hung by the Kurdish Language Movement Association (HezKurd) at the Avcılar Teachers’ House to raise awareness of the right to Kurdish language education, was subjected to a knife attack by an individual.

April

- The Antalya Governor’s Office issued a decision banning street weddings. The measure led to the prevention of Kurdish weddings in neighborhoods with a dense Kurdish population.

May

- During the May session of the Kocaeli Metropolitan Municipal Council, a DEM Party member who attempted to celebrate Kurdish Language Day was interrupted by Mayor Tahir Büyükakın.
- A Kurdish-language sign hung at Iğdır Municipality was targeted on social media.
- Banners reading “Azadî Îmamoğlu,” hung on the Diyarbakır City Walls, were removed by the police.
- At a school event at Yalova TOBB Vocational and Technical Anatolian High School where Kurdish halay music was played, the acting school principal interrupted the music and ended the event.
- Students who tried to bring a Kurdish banner reading “Şagirtên Apê Musa Hatin” (“Students of Uncle Musa Have Arrived”) to the graduation ceremony at Dicle University were blocked on the grounds of “security concerns.”
- The Istanbul Branch of the Association of Lawyers for Freedom (ÖHD) attempted to hold a press statement in front of the Istanbul Courthouse in Çağlayan on May 15, Kurdish Language Day. They held a banner reading “Divê zimanê Kurdî bibe zimanê fermî û perwerdeyê” (“The Kurdish language should be an official and educational language”). The police surrounded the lawyers and tried to prevent the statement.

June

- A musician singing in Kurdish in Mannheim, Germany, was physically attacked by a man shouting “I’m Turkish.”
- Before a Pegasus flight from Istanbul to Diyarbakır, Kurdish passengers who did not speak Turkish were scolded by ground staff who said, “You must speak Turkish.” Psychologist Duygu Berekatoğlu, who witnessed the incident, shared the experience on her X account, stating that the passengers were shouted at over cabin baggage issues with the justification that “This is Turkey, Turkish is the common language and must be spoken.”

Media

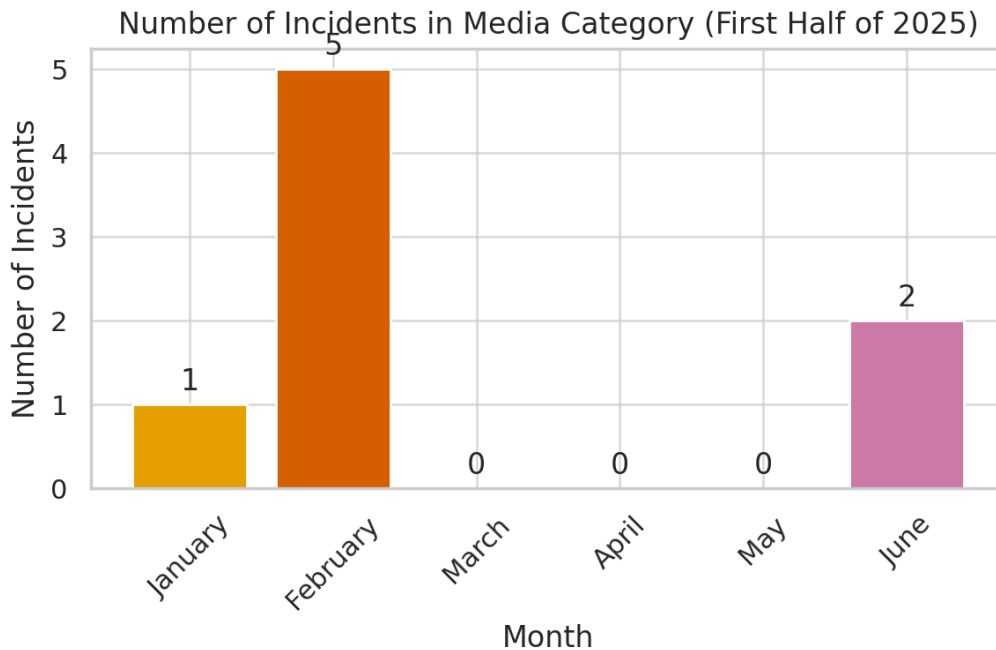
January

- The X (formerly Twitter) account of Mezopotamya Agency with 263,000 followers, along with the accounts of JINNEWS and Yeni Yaşam, were blocked in Turkey. Mezopotamya Agency's new account was also suspended shortly thereafter.

February

- The 2nd Criminal Court of Peace in Adıyaman imposed an access ban on Mezopotamya Agency's website, citing "national security and public order."
- The Kurdish-language service website of Voice of America (VOA) was blocked in Turkey for the same reason.
- Journalist Abdurrahman Gök's YouTube, X, and Instagram accounts were blocked by decision of the 6th Criminal Court of Peace in Ankara.

- Mezopotamya Agency’s website and the Turkish and Kurdish X accounts of JINNEWS were blocked.
- JINNEWS and Xwebûn’s X accounts were also blocked for users in Turkey.



- Sözcü TV presenter Serap Belovacıklı did not air the moment when Ahmet Türk read a Kurdish letter written by PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan on February 27. Belovacıklı stated, “We will broadcast it once it is done in Turkish, the official language of the Republic of Turkey.” She also claimed, “No one understands Kurdish.” Habertürk TV and NTV also censored the Kurdish parts of the statement.

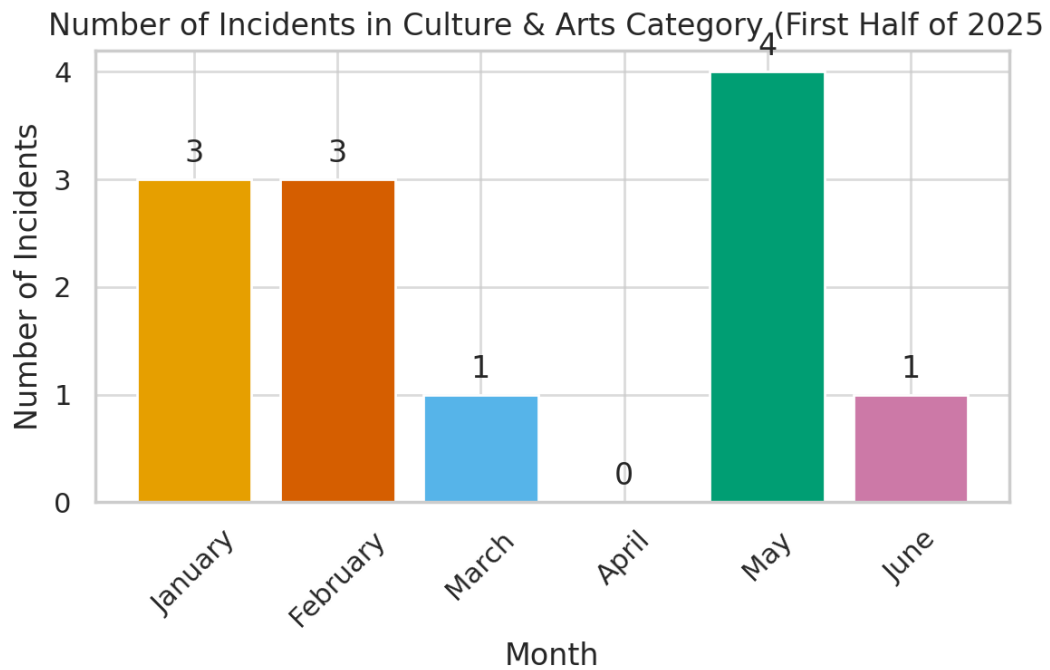
June

- A user suggestion for “Kurdish-language content” on Ekşi Sözlük triggered a wave of racist backlash.

Culture & Arts

January

- Police raided the Kurdish Writers Association (Komeleya Wêjekarên Kurd) in Diyarbakır and confiscated 150 books and 1,500 newspapers.
- An academic from the Department of Kurdish Language and Literature at Muş Alparslan University was subjected to a disciplinary investigation for teaching Kurdish poetry. The department's justification was that the books had "inappropriate political content." However, the books in question were officially approved publications by the Ministry of Culture, including works by Fatma Savcı (Avesta Publishing), Arjen Arî (Sora Publishing), and Cegerxwîn (Lis Publishing). There is no ban or legal case concerning these books.
- Artist Kasım Taşdoğan was sentenced to 30 months in prison on charges of "terror propaganda" for singing three Kurdish songs in Kars and Çanakkale.



February

- Kurdish artist Seyda Perinçek, who planned to perform a concert in Japan, was detained and deported. It was claimed that the Turkish consulate intervened to cancel the concert.
- Police raided the Jîn Art House in Konak, İzmir. Security cameras were disabled, books and computers were confiscated, and a Turkish flag was drawn on the whiteboard.
- Kurdish artist Mazlum Akpolat was arrested to serve a 22-month and 15-day prison sentence for singing a Kurdish song in 2016.

March

- Kurdish writers Mevlüt Aykoç, Sami Tan, Ronahî Önen, and Sadık Varlı were detained due to the Kurdish educational book “Hîner.” İzzet Çınar and Şükriye Çınar were also detained because their photos were featured in the book. Aykoç, Tan, Önen, and the Çınars were released under judicial control, while Varlı was released without conditions.

May

- Kurdish author Şerif Yılmaz’s novel Lawikê Gundê was confiscated by court order for allegedly being a “publication affiliated with a terrorist organization.”

- Despite all applications, Van State Theatre rejected the request by Nupelda Theater to perform the Kurdish play “Ma Diz Yek E!” on its stage.
- Five Kurdish writers were banned from attending the Youth Festival and Book Fair organized by the AKP Municipality in Bitlis by order of the Governor’s Office.
- The verses of 40 classical Kurdish poets, including Melayê Cizîrî, Feqiyê Teyran, Hacı Qadirê Koyî, Melayê Xasî, and Siyapûş, which had been embedded into the sidewalk of Gazi Street in Sur District by the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality, were vandalized. The municipality removed the engravings and displayed them on poles instead.

June

- After 33 years, the Kurdish-language service of Voice of America (VOA) was discontinued.

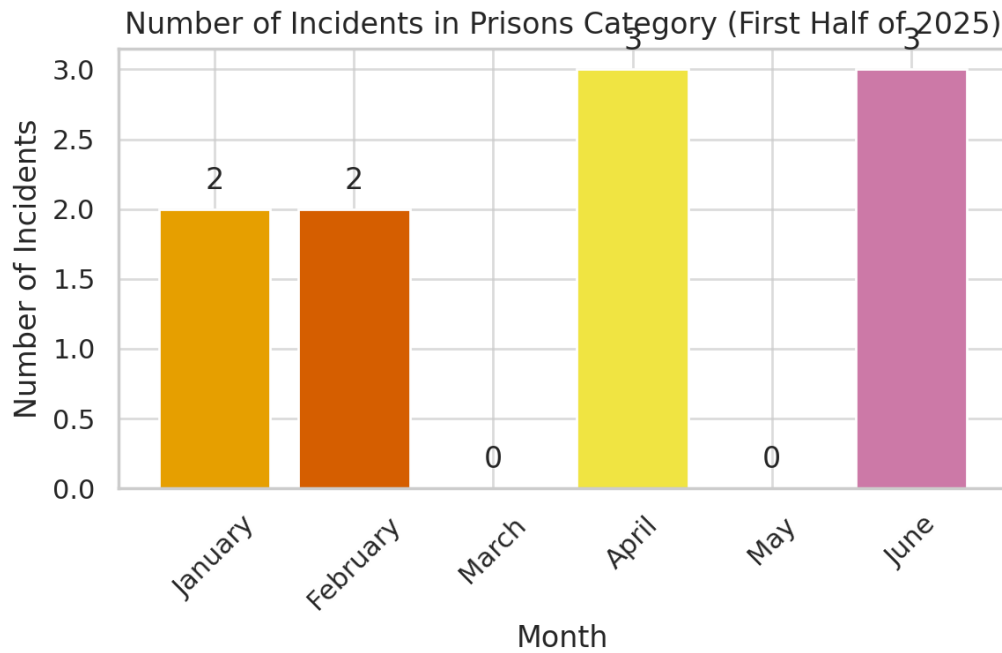
Prisons

January

- Salim Güran, an inmate in Erzurum Dumlupınar Type 1 High-Security Prison, was prevented from making a phone call in Kurdish with his family.
- In Kırşehir High-Security Prison, some Kurdish-language books were denied to prisoners solely due to the language.

February

- In Erzincan Women's Prison, Kurdish letters were reportedly delayed for 4-5 months.
- In Elazığ Type 1 Prison, access to Kurdish books was restricted and translation fees were demanded.



April

- The Constitutional Court ruled that a disciplinary punishment given to Cengaver Aykul in Elazığ Prison for possessing a Kurdish dictionary violated freedom of expression and ordered compensation.
- In Bolu Prison, letters written in Kurdish by inmate İhsan Balkaş were not sent, citing incomprehensibility, and translation fees were requested.
- The release of 33 inmates in Bolu Prison was blocked on the grounds that they read Kurdish books, publications, or watched Kurdish TV.

June

- In Bolu Prison, Kurdish letters were not sent and access to publications was restricted.
- A systematic ban was imposed on Kurdish and opposition publications in 17 prisons across the Marmara region.
- In Erzurum Prison, a jersey with the word "Hebûn" was not delivered to a prisoner due to its Kurdish content.