

Türkiye

Attacks on education continued in Türkiye during the current reporting period, including reports of attacks on school teachers and personnel. Attacks on higher education students continued, mostly in the context of protest repression.

Context

Türkiye continued to face internal tensions and human rights violations during the reporting period. Conflict with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) mainly occurred in southeastern provinces and outside Türkiye's borders with northern Iraq and northeast Syria, where Turkish forces carried out cross-border airstrikes and drone strikes.¹ In May 2025, the PKK pledged to disband and disarm based on a call from Abdullah Öcalan, the leader of PKK.² Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International reported that political space remained tightly restricted, with widespread crackdowns on dissent, arbitrary detention of journalists, lawyers, and activists, and pervasive limitations on freedoms of expression, peaceful assembly and expression and association.³ Also according to Human Rights Watch, Türkiye's authorities deepened restrictions on online speech and protests in the lead-up to the 2024 municipal elections, further eroding civic space.⁴ In 2025, protest repression occurred at events associated with International Women's Day and LGBTIQ+ rights, as well as at protests against university policies, and the detention of Ekrem İmamoğlu, the Mayor of Istanbul and the Republican People's Party's candidate for future presidential elections.⁵ In 2024, as Türkiye continued to host one of the world's largest populations of displaced people, including 2.9 million Syrians under temporary protection, government policies were increasingly marked by deportations and coercive returns.⁶

Teachers and education unions criticized and protested the Teachers Profession Law, enacted in 2024 in order to professionalize the sector, for undermining professional autonomy, centralizing government control, and weakening union influence.⁷ Academic rights groups also reported a constrained civic environment that impacted the safety of educational spaces and access to them.⁸

During the reporting period, the impacts of the February 2023 earthquakes on infrastructure and access to education persisted.⁹ According to the Türkiye Education Sector Working Group, approximately 17 per cent of children in earthquake-affected areas were not attending school for the 2024-2025 school year.¹⁰ As of the beginning of 2025, one in four children who had been displaced by the earthquake were still living in temporary shelters.¹¹

Attacks on school students, teachers, and other education personnel

GCPEA identified at least five attacks on school students, teachers, and other education personnel during the 2024-2025 reporting period. This is greater than the previous reporting period, when GCPEA identified zero attacks in 2023 and four in 2022.¹² Similar to the previous reporting period, attacks in this reporting period primarily involved acts of protest suppression by the police, including detention, arrest, and use of physical force. Attacks mostly took place at protests in Ankara, and centered around issues associated with teacher salary demands, working conditions, job security, and hiring processes.

In 2024, GCPEA identified four attacks on school students, teachers, and other education personnel:

- On May 29, 2024, as reported by ACLED and local news outlets *Evrensel* and *Bianet*, during a teacher protest in Çankaya district, Ankara, near the Turkish Parliament, police allegedly detained 11 protestors.¹³
- On July 2, 2024, as reported by ACLED and local news outlet *Sendika*, during a protest related to salaries organized by a teacher union, police allegedly detained around 25 protestors outside the Ministry of National Education in Çankaya district, Ankara. Seven detainees appeared to be female teachers.¹⁴
- On July 9, 2024, as reported by ACLED and local news outlet *Evrensel*, during a teacher union protest against the "Teachers Profession Law" in front of the Ministry of National Education in Çankaya district, Ankara, police allegedly used excessive force and detained at least 11 protestors.¹⁵
- On December 5, 2024, as reported by ACLED and local media outlets *Evrensel* and *Sözcü*, during a teacher sit-in protest, regarding their alleged unfair treatment during their interviews to become public sector teachers in front of the Ministry of National Education in Ankara, police allegedly detained two protestors.¹⁶

In 2025, GCPEA identified at least one attack on school students, teachers, and other education personnel: on April 15, 2025, as reported by ACLED and local media source *Anka Haber Ajansı*, during a teacher protest held in front of the Ministry of National Education in Ankara, police allegedly used excessive force against protestors.¹⁷

Attacks on higher education

GCPEA identified at least nine attacks on higher education during the 2024-2025 reporting period with three incidents occurring in each year respectively. This was a large decrease compared to the prior reporting period, when GCPEA identified 12 attacks in 2023 and 13 in 2022,¹⁸ although at least 300 students and staff members were reportedly detained or arrested during the current reporting period, a significant increase.

In 2024, GCPEA identified three attacks on higher education:

- On February 21, 2024, as reported by Scholars at Risk, police allegedly used excessive force during a student protest regarding university policy decisions at Istanbul University. One student was reportedly injured and consequently hospitalized.¹⁹
- On March 7, 2024, as reported by *Scholars at Risk*, police allegedly detained approximately ten protestors who were marching for International Women's Day with a LGBTIQ+ banner at Istanbul University.²⁰
- As reported by ACLED and local media *Sendika* and *Bianet*, on October 9, 2024, police detained at least four students protesting on the Göztepe campus of Marmara University, in Kadıköy district, Istanbul. Students had gathered to demonstrate against gender-based violence in Türkiye.²¹

In 2025, GCPEA identified at least six attacks on higher education.²² For example:

- On March 20, 2025, as reported by Scholars at Risk and Amnesty International, police forcibly dispersed students protesting at Middle East Technical University, Istanbul, with pepper spray and water cannons. This protest was part of a nationwide protest on March 19, 2025 related to the arrest of Ekrem İmamoğlu.²³
- As reported by Human Rights Watch, on March 26, 2025, members of the board of a teachers' union were placed under house arrest pending trial for 'inciting crime,' after they called for a one-day strike in solidarity with the student protests that followed the arrest of Ekrem İmamoğlu.²⁴
- On March 27, 2025, as reported by Scholars at Risk, police forcibly dispersed students protesting at the Middle East Technical University, Ankara, and reportedly detained twenty students. In continuation of the protest detailed above, on March 20, 2025, students were protesting the arrest of Ekrem İmamoğlu. Police allegedly used pepper spray, plastic pellets, and water cannons to disperse students, and allegedly charged at students who were behind a barricade of dumpsters.²⁵
- As reported by Scholars at Risk, ACLED and local media source *RNZ*, on May 13, 2025, police allegedly used excessive force and detained at least 97 students at the north campus of Boğaziçi University, Istanbul, who were protesting against the Boğaziçi University's Islamic Studies Club's invitation of preacher Nureddin Yıldız to speak on campus.²⁶ Reportedly six students were remanded in pre-trial detention.