

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

KHRP continues to make submission to the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and actively participates in the OSCE Human Dimension Mechanisms in order to voice its concern that some participating States, in particular Turkey but also including Armenia and Azerbaijan, fail to uphold their OSCE commitments and adhere to internationally accepted human rights standards.

Since the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, Turkey has not recognised the existence of a separate Kurdish ethnic community within its borders. Over 20 million Kurds presently live in Turkey, which makes around 23 per cent of the entire Turkish population ethnically Kurdish. For decades the Kurdish people living in Turkey have been subjected to economic disadvantage and human rights violations that bear the hallmarks of systematic persecution intent on destroying Kurdish identity. The Turkish government's general refusal to tolerate the use of languages other than Turkish in any public, educational or official capacity forms just one aspect of its campaign to suffocate Kurdish culture within the nation.

In recent years, Turkey has responded to pressure from the European Union (EU) and enacted new legislation meant to grant the Kurdish people greater rights and bring them closer to equality with the rest of the Turkish citizenry. On the face such efforts deserve praise, yet even a cursory examination

of the state of affairs on the ground exposes these purported reforms as largely superficial and, in the lives of most Kurds in Turkey, ineffective in initiating any real change. This year alone, several high-profile trials have highlighted both Turkey's reluctance to embrace certain freedoms, and also its continued disinclination to prosecute state or civil actors who perpetrate crimes against national minorities. Indeed, even under the watch of the EU and other international bodies, Turkey has reverted to its old habits of torture, repression, denial of freedom of expression and association and discrimination against the Kurdish people and other national minority groups. Furthermore, in 2007 the Turkish Armed Forces have taken a visibly aggressive stance towards the Kurdish people not just within the Turkish nation, but also across the border in Kurdistan, Iraq. Just before the elections, the Turkish Armed Forces issued 3 separate statements threatening those who it claims interfere the secular unity of the state, and calling on the Turkish people to take matters into their own hands should they identify a threat to nationalism. The Turkish military's hostility towards Kurdistan, Iraq has also attracted international attention and censure, yet it refuses to back down, and tensions remain high.

This report focuses on the extent to which Turkey has respected the commitments it has agreed to fulfil as an OSCE participating State with regard to topics such as national minorities, the prevention of torture, IDPs and freedom of expression and association. It also makes recommendations for improving Turkey's human rights record and enabling it to uphold its OSCE commitments

in the future. Finally, this report makes suggestions as to where OSCE initiatives may be useful in providing support and assistance to achieve such objectives.

KHRP encourages the participating States of the OSCE to give their most urgent consideration to the situation faced by the Kurds in Turkey and to assist the Turkish government to end these human rights violations, thereby strengthening and securing not only its own nation, but the entire OSCE region.