



Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

REPUBLIC OF TÜRKIYE

**GENERAL ELECTIONS 14 MAY
AND PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION,
SECOND ROUND 28 MAY 2023**

**ODIHR Election Observation Mission
Final Report**



Warsaw
29 September 2023

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REPUBLIC OF TÜRKIYE
GENERAL ELECTIONS
14 May
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, SECOND ROUND 28 May 2023

ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report¹

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following an invitation from the authorities of Türkiye and based on the recommendation of a Needs Assessment Mission, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) deployed an Election Observation Mission (EOM) for the 14 May 2023 general elections and remained in the country to follow the second round of the presidential election on 28 May. The ODIHR EOM assessed the electoral process for compliance with OSCE commitments, other international obligations and standards for democratic elections, and national legislation. For both election days, the ODIHR EOM was joined by delegations of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to form an International Election Observation Mission (IEOM).

In its Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions issued on 15 May, the IEOM concluded that “In the 14 May general elections, held in the wake of devastating earthquakes, voters had a choice between genuine political alternatives and voter participation was high, but the incumbent president and the ruling parties enjoyed an unjustified advantage, including through biased media coverage. The continued restrictions on fundamental freedoms of assembly, association and expression hindered the participation of some opposition politicians and parties, civil society and independent media in the election process. Nonetheless, the campaign itself was competitive and largely free for most contestants but characterized by intense polarization, and marred by harsh rhetoric, instances of misuse of administrative resources, and the pressure and intimidation faced by one opposition party. Election day was generally well-organized and assessed positively by IEOM observers, however, instances of deficient implementation of certain procedures, particularly during voting and counting were noted.”

In its Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions following the second round of the presidential election, issued on 29 May, the IEOM concluded that “Voter participation remained high, however, as in the first round, biased media coverage and the lack of a level playing field gave an unjustified advantage to the incumbent. The election administration technically managed the election efficiently, but its lack of transparency and communication largely persisted. [...] In an environment with restrictions on freedom of expression, both private and public media did not ensure editorial independence and impartiality in their coverage of the campaign, detracting from the ability of voters to make an informed choice. Election day was generally calm and well-administered. However, instances of deficient implementation of certain procedures, particularly during the vote count, were noted.”

The legal framework does not fully provide a sound basis for the conduct of democratic elections, and contains undue limitations on key rights and freedoms. The 2022 legal amendments positively reduced the parliamentary threshold, following long-standing recommendations from ODIHR and the Council of Europe’s Venice Commission. Other amendments included changes to the mandate allocation system, limitations on eligibility criteria for political parties, and a new appointment mechanism for mid-level electoral councils, the latter diminished stakeholder trust in the electoral process. Most other recommendations remain unaddressed, including those related to restrictions on passive and active suffrage rights, the method of seat distribution among constituencies, media freedoms, campaign and campaign finance regulations, non-partisan observation, and election dispute resolution. Moreover,

¹ The English version of this report is the only official document. An unofficial translation is available in local languages.

legal gaps and ambiguities, including those concerning essential aspects of the second round of the presidential election, led to legal uncertainties, despite of Supreme Electoral Council (SEC) efforts to address them through regulations.

The method for seat distribution amongst some electoral constituencies undermines the equality of the vote. Following the distribution, 38 of the 87 electoral constituencies have a deviation of more than 15 per cent from the average number of citizens, with more than half of the 38 above 30 per cent.

The election administration, headed by the SEC, efficiently managed the electoral process, generally adhering to legal deadlines, despite the challenges posed by the recent earthquakes, a compressed timeline for two parallel contests, and a short timeframe for the run-off. While the electoral bodies enjoyed stakeholders' trust for its technical efficiency, public confidence in its independence varied. In addition, the activities of the election administration were undermined by a lack of transparency in both rounds: the SEC and mid-level electoral councils did not hold public sessions, and, despite the legal requirements, the SEC did not publish most of its decisions. Training and voter education efforts carried out by the election administration were limited and were not fully comprehensive.

Persisting restrictions on voting rights of individuals declared legally incompetent by a court, prisoners, regardless of the severity of their crime, conscripts and students in military schools are at odds with international standards and OSCE commitments. The public generally had confidence in the accuracy of the voter register, despite some shortcomings. The authorities took measures to facilitate changes of address and voting for those affected by the earthquakes but the measure were insufficient and many voters still faced significant challenges to return to vote at their permanent residences, despite civil society and political party initiatives to provide free transportation.

The legislation maintains excessive candidacy restrictions for individuals declared legally incompetent, banned from public service, in military service, or convicted of a broad range of crimes, at odds with the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document. The technical registration process of candidates managed by the SEC was inclusive. Still, ongoing dissolution proceedings against the second largest opposition party impeded its participation, and the criminal prosecution of some prominent opposition politicians may have affected their candidacy. The 2022 amendments further tightened the criteria for political parties seeking to register with the SEC as electoral contestants. The SEC received numerous objections regarding its decisions on accepting or denying the registration of candidates. Challenges to the candidacy of the incumbent President arguing that he was seeking an unconstitutional third term were dismissed by the SEC.

While the Constitution guarantees equality between men and women, the underrepresentation of women in politics and leadership positions underscored the need for more concerted efforts from authorities and political parties to tackle stereotypes that hinder women's political engagement. Approximately one in four parliamentary candidates were women, but no woman candidate ran for the presidency. Women's visibility was limited in the campaign, with only a few parties promoting women's equality and combating gender-based violence, including in the presidential run-off. The proportion of women in the newly elected parliament increased from 17 to 20 per cent.

Freedoms of association and assembly were generally upheld during the campaign, with the notable exception of the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) and the Green Left Party (YSP), which experienced widespread pressure, intimidation, and arrests of their supporters, curtailing their campaign activities. In the first round, campaigns were intense, often characterized by harsh language and inflammatory messages, including against the LGBTI community. Although these messages persisted, the second round was more subdued and saw frequent discriminatory remarks about migrants and refugees. The President frequently campaigned during official duties, including inauguration of major infrastructure projects and announced substantial social benefit programs during the campaign. These practices and

other observed instances of the misuse of administrative resources blurred the line between party and state and provided the incumbency with an undue advantage, at odds with the 1990 Copenhagen Document.

Campaign finance is insufficiently regulated, and most long-standing ODIHR and the Council of Europe's GRECO recommendations remain unaddressed, including on the introduction of spending limits, enhancing transparency, and improving the effectiveness of the oversight mechanism. This, combined with the limited enforcement, significantly decreased stakeholders' trust in the integrity and accountability of the regulatory system. Due to a lack of interim campaign finance reporting, voters had limited information about campaign incomes and expenditures before election day.

The ODIHR EOM media monitoring found that public broadcasters in both rounds clearly favoured the ruling parties and their candidates, despite constitutional guarantees of impartiality. In their coverage, some private media favoured either the opposition or the ruling party, while others provided more diverse coverage of contestants. Criminal liability for defamation and insult of certain public officials, combined with the recent criminalization of disseminating false information, frequent blocking of websites and online content removal, and cases of arrests and prosecutions of journalists in the election period had a detrimental effect on freedom of expression and contributed to self-censorship. In addition, media coverage of the campaign lacked effective oversight with violations not receiving prompt redress.

The legal framework does not adequately ensure effective redress for electoral disputes. Contrary to OSCE commitments, the Constitution grants final authority over the electoral process and results to an election management body, denying the opportunity for effective remedy. The process for handling complaints at all levels of the election administration lacked transparency and published SEC decisions were generally not sufficiently reasoned. The SEC established unduly short timelines for the submission and resolution of post-election complaints, contrary to international good practice. The election administration, law enforcement bodies, and courts did not enjoy full confidence of stakeholders in resolving electoral grievances impartially and effectively.

The law does not provide for non-partisan citizen and international observation of the election process, despite OSCE commitments. Despite this restriction, some civil society organizations applied, but were denied accreditation. Observation by those nominated by electoral contestants is permitted, and the public is allowed to observe the vote count. While the SEC accredited a number of international organizations to observe the elections, including ODIHR and other organizations making up the IEOM, some international bodies and individuals were rejected accreditation.

The first-round election day was generally well-organized, with some instances of inconsistent implementation of procedural safeguards and notable hindrances to meaningful observation. In some polling stations, the layout did not fully guarantee the secrecy of the vote, and family or group voting were frequent. Overcrowding was reported from every seventh polling station. During the vote count, significant procedural errors were observed, mainly due to the omission of reconciliation procedures and important safeguards. The tabulation process was efficient but sometimes impacted by inadequate premises, multiple procedures conducted concurrently and overcrowding, detracting from transparency. IEOM observers were denied access to at least 36 out of 1,022 polling stations visited. In-country voter turnout was reported at 88.92 per cent.

As none of the four presidential candidates obtained the legally required absolute majority for election, a second round was held on 28 May between the two top candidates. The run-off election day was well administered and largely peaceful. Yet, IEOM observers noted several procedural inconsistencies, particularly regarding the provision of instructions to voters. Group or family voting were also observed. Observers from political parties and civil society faced obstruction of their activities in some instances

and a number of cases of interference from unauthorized individuals in ballot box committees operations were also noted. The vote count featured several shortcomings.

This report offers recommendations to support efforts to bring elections in Türkiye closer in line with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections. Priority recommendations pertain to revising the electoral legal framework, enhancing transparency of the election administration, lifting undue restrictions on voting rights, encouraging active political participation of women, ensuring an equal playing field for all electoral contestants, aligning the campaign finance legal framework with international good practice and prior recommendations, enhancing freedom of expression, including online, and providing fully effective legal recourse mechanisms. ODIHR stands ready to assist the authorities to address the recommendations contained in this and previous reports.

II. INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Following an invitation from the authorities of Türkiye to observe the 14 May 2023 general elections and in accordance with its mandate, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) established an Election Observation Mission (EOM) on 27 March. The mission, led by Ambassador Jan Petersen, consisted of a 17-member core team based in Ankara and 28 long-term observers deployed on 7 April across the country. The ODIHR EOM maintained a presence in the country until 6 June to follow the presidential run-off election and post-election day developments.

For the election days, the ODIHR EOM was joined by delegations from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) to form an International Election Observation Mission (IEOM). In the first round, Michael Georg Link was appointed by the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office as Special Co-ordinator and Leader of the OSCE short-term observer mission. Farahnaz Karimi headed the OSCE PA delegation, and Frank Schwabe headed the PACE delegation. On election day, 401 observers from 40 countries were deployed, including 28 long-term and 213 short-term observers deployed by ODIHR, as well as a 98-member delegation from the OSCE PA, a 39-member delegation from the PACE. Opening was observed in 132 polling stations and voting was observed in 1,022 polling stations across the country. Counting was observed in 120 polling stations, and the tabulation in 97 DECes.

For the presidential run-off, Farahnaz Karimi was appointed as Special Co-ordinator and Leader of the OSCE short-term observer mission. On election day, 232 observers from 31 countries were deployed, including 26 long-term and 133 short-term observers deployed by ODIHR, as well as a 31-member delegation from the OSCE PA, and a 20-member delegation from the PACE. Opening was observed in 83 polling stations and voting was observed in 651 polling stations across the country. Counting was observed in 84 polling stations, and the tabulation in 60 DECes. Overall, 47 per cent of the IEOM observers for both rounds were women.

The ODIHR EOM assessed compliance of the electoral process with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections and domestic legislation. This final report follows two Statements of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions, released at press conferences on 15 May and 29 May.

The ODIHR EOM wishes to thank the authorities of Türkiye for their invitation to observe the elections and the Supreme Electoral Council (SEC) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their assistance. It also expresses appreciation to other state institutions, the judiciary, political parties, media, civil society organizations, international community representatives and other interlocutors for their co-operation and for sharing their views.

III. BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

In January 2023, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan announced plans to move the 2023 general elections from the constitutionally scheduled date of 18 June to 14 May to avoid a potential negative impact on voter turnout due to coinciding events in June.² On 6 February, a series of major earthquakes struck the South-East of the country, causing significant loss of life and damage to infrastructure.³ On 8 February, the President declared a three-month state of emergency in the impacted provinces to facilitate relief and recovery efforts, which was subsequently approved by the parliament. In line with the Constitution and with the consensus of all parliamentary political parties, the President, on 10 March, called for early general elections to take place on 14 May.

The political landscape is dominated by the ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Parti), in power since 2002. The elections, characterized by deep polarization and intense competition among contrasting political agendas, unfolded around two major coalitions, the People's Alliance and the Nation Alliance.⁴ Concerns of various international organizations about systematic targeting of some opposition parties and figures in the recent years were reiterated by some IEOM interlocutors emphasizing the potential impact on their ability to participate in elections. Dissolution proceedings against the People's Democratic Party (HDP), initiated in March 2021, continued throughout the elections.⁵ In connection to the ongoing case, the party fielded its candidates under the banner of the Green Left Party (YSP).⁶ In December 2022, Istanbul mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, widely considered a potential presidential candidate for the Republican People's Party (CHP), was sentenced to more than two years of imprisonment for insulting members of the Supreme Electoral Council (SEC); the sentence did not enter into force as the case was under appeal.⁷

² According to the Constitution, the general elections were set to take place on 18 June. Following a cabinet meeting of 23 January, the president stated that holding elections in June, during the pilgrimage season, university entrance exams, and summer holidays, would not be suitable, and that elections on 14 May would better reflect the "national will".

³ The National Disaster and Emergency Agency (AFAD) [reported](#) that the earthquakes displaced nearly 3 million people and resulted in at least 50,339 fatalities as of 5 April. In the weeks following the earthquakes, 1.6 million individuals were sheltering in the affected area, 323,000 outside, and 900,000 under their own means elsewhere. The number of missing citizens, not yet legally declared deceased, remains unknown.

⁴ The governing People's Alliance consisted of AK Parti, Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), Great Unity Party (BBP), and New Welfare Party (YRP). It was supported by three other parties which did not appear on the ballot: Great Türkiye Party, Democratic Left Party (DSP), and HÜDA-PAR. Nation Alliance, also known as "Table of Six", consisted of Republican People's Party (CHP) and Good Party (*İyi Parti*); Democracy and Progress Party (DEVA), Democrat Party (DP), Felicity Party (SP) and Future Party (GP) did not appear on the ballot. Other parliamentary parties that ran for the 2023 elections were Homeland Party (*Memleket*); Innovation Party (YP) and Victory Party (ZP).

⁵ In 2021, the Public Prosecutor's Office of the Court of Cassation initiated a closure case against HDP, accusing the party of having ties with the terrorist organization Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which is designated as a terrorist organization by Türkiye, the European Union, and several other countries, and requesting a five-year ban on political activities for 451 of its members. According to the Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe (PACE) 2021 report on [Functioning of democratic institutions in Turkey](#), "[t]he attempt to close the HDP appears as the culmination of a process of continued pressure. [...] It is a worrying development which has raised the question of its political motivation ahead of the next presidential and parliamentary elections planned in 2023".

⁶ YSP formed the Labour and Freedom coalition with the Worker's Party of Türkiye (TİP).

⁷ The [Congress of local and regional authorities](#) of the Council of Europe viewed Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu's sentence as "a direct attack on local democracy". According to a December 2022 [press statement](#) of the European Union External Action Service, the sentence was disproportionate and confirmed "the systemic lack of independence of the judiciary and the undue political pressure on judges and prosecutors in Turkey".

Long-standing concerns about the respect of the fundamental freedoms of assembly, association and expression as well as independence of the judiciary, key to a democratic process, remained.⁸ Several civil society organizations (CSOs) and human rights defenders met with by the ODIHR EOM reported consistent pressure and targeting from the authorities, in contravention of OSCE commitments and Council of Europe standards.⁹ Numerous rulings of the European Court of Human Rights finding a violation of fundamental freedoms remained unaddressed.¹⁰

The Constitution provides for the equality of men and women. However, women are underrepresented in politics and leadership positions. The last election resulted in 104 of the 600 members (17 per cent) women elected, and only 1 of the outgoing 17 ministers was a woman. Women represent 3 per cent of mayors, 2 per cent of village heads, and 11 per cent of local councillors. In 2021, the country withdrew from the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention).¹¹

IV. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The elections were primarily regulated by the 1982 Constitution, 1961 Law on Basic Provisions for Elections and Voter Registers (Law on Basic Provisions), 1983 Law on Parliamentary Elections, 2012 Law on Presidential Elections, 1983 Law on Political Parties, 2017 Law on the Organization and Duties of the SEC, 1983 Law on Meetings and Demonstrations, and supplemented by SEC regulations and decisions. Türkiye is a party to major international and regional human rights instruments related to the conduct of democratic elections.¹²

The legal framework does not fully provide a sound legal basis for the conduct of democratic elections. The Constitution, adopted under martial law, does not sufficiently guarantee suffrage rights and the freedoms of association, assembly and expression that underpin democratic elections, as it focuses on prohibitions for the protection of the state and permits legislation that has imposed further undue

⁸ In the years leading up to the elections, several international organizations expressed concerns about the respect for civil and political rights in Türkiye. The European Commission's [2022 Report on Türkiye](#) notes that "[t]he human rights situation continued to deteriorate. Broad restrictions on the activities of journalists, writers, lawyers, academics, human rights defenders and critical voices continued to have a negative effect on the exercise of their freedoms." See also page 7 of the 2020 [Report of the Commissioner for Human Rights](#) of the Council of Europe on the general deterioration in the situation regarding human rights since 2016.

⁹ In Paragraph 10.3 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document, the OSCE participating States recognized citizens' right to "form, join and participate effectively in nongovernmental organizations which seek the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including trade unions and human rights monitoring groups. The 2020 [Report of the Commissioner for Human Rights](#) of the Council of Europe stated that "Turkish officials, including at the highest level, regularly target human rights defenders and rights-based NGOs, frequently labelling them as terrorists and public enemies", with the judiciary initiating "proceedings against NGOs and human rights defenders immediately after statements by politicians or defamatory articles published in pro-government newspapers."

¹⁰ ECtHR rulings found a violation of Article 18 of the Convention, relating to former HDP co-chair [Selahattin Demirtas](#) and philanthropist [Osman Kavala](#), who have been in prison for over five years, despite rulings by the ECtHR demanding their immediate release.

¹¹ Türkiye is not signatory party of the [Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence](#).

¹² These include the 1965 [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination](#), 1966 [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#), 1979 [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women](#), 2003 [Convention Against Corruption](#), and the 2006 [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#). Türkiye is a member of the Council of Europe's Venice Commission and Group of States Against Corruption (GRECO) and is a party to the 1950 [European Convention for Human Rights](#). Türkiye has not signed the Council of Europe's [Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities](#).

limitations on such rights.¹³ Furthermore, the law does not effectively guarantee the independence of the judiciary, also impacting the independence of electoral management bodies composed of sitting judges.¹⁴

Since 2018, amendments to the Law on Provincial Administration have granted provincial governors extraordinary powers to restrict certain freedoms for up to 15 days to protect public order or security. Such broad powers are contrary to the international human rights framework, as internationally-protected rights and freedoms should be circumscribed only under a declared state of emergency and with notification of derogation.¹⁵ In the electoral period, several governors used these powers to introduce temporary bans on freedom of assembly and expression (see *Electoral Campaign*).

To provide a basis for the conduct of fully democratic elections, constitutional reform should ensure broad guarantees for fundamental rights and freedoms and independence of the judiciary. The legislative framework should be amended to be consistent with fundamental freedoms of association, assembly, expression, and electoral rights.

Amendments to various laws adopted in March 2022, based on a proposal from AK Parti and the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), introduced significant changes to the electoral legal framework.¹⁶ The amendments were adopted within a few weeks, lacking genuine political debate and inclusive public consultation, at odds with Türkiye's international commitments.¹⁷ Positively, some of the changes addressed previous ODIHR recommendations for lowering the parliamentary threshold for political parties and facilitating electoral participation for voters with visual impairments. However, some amendments, including a new method to appoint judge members to mid-level electoral councils, diminished stakeholder trust in the electoral process, and were unsuccessfully challenged in the Constitutional Court.¹⁸

¹³ For instance, regional-based political parties are banned, and parties are prohibited from promoting certain political agendas, including the existence of minorities. Insult of the president, other public figures and certain state institutions is criminalized. In 2022, dissemination of misinformation was criminalized.

¹⁴ In its 2019 [Interim Compliance Report](#), GRECO concluded that its prior recommendation on strengthening the independence of the High Council of Judges and Prosecutors (HCJP) in respect of potential threats to its independence from the executive authorities and political influence was not implemented. The 2020 [Report of the Commissioner for Human Rights](#) of the Council of Europe states that “many [...] factors contributed to a deterioration of the independence of the judiciary, in particular as regards the safety and security of tenure of judges”. In a May 2022 [submission](#), the International Commission of Jurists referred to “years of concerning trends in relation to rule of law and judicial independence in Turkey”. See also references of the European Commission’s 2022 [Report on Türkiye](#) to a “systemic lack of independence of the judiciary and undue pressure on judges and prosecutors”.

¹⁵ See United Nations [General Comment 29](#) to Article 4 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. A group of 141 CHP members of parliament challenged the constitutionality of this amendment; on 30 June 2022, the Constitutional Court issued its [decision](#) dismissing the case. The European Parliament [resolution](#) of 13 May 2019 on the 2018 Commission Report on Türkiye stated that the new Law 7145 “preserves many of the powers...under the [post-coup attempt] state of emergency and basically enables [the state of emergency] to continue with all the limitations this entails on freedoms and basic human rights.”

¹⁶ The changes include a lower parliamentary threshold, a revised system for seat allocation, changes to eligibility criteria for political parties and a new method for selection of members of mid-level electoral councils by lottery.

¹⁷ See Paragraph 5.8 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#), which commits participating States to ensure that “legislation (is) adopted at the end of a public procedure”. Also see the 2022 Venice Commission and ODIHR [Joint Opinion](#) on the Amendments to the Electoral Legislation by Law No. 7393 of 31 March 2022.

¹⁸ The complaint was lodged on 12 April 2022 by 136 CHP MPs. It argued that the replacement of sitting senior judge members on the councils, before their terms ended, undermines the competence and independence of election administrators. The Constitutional Court [decision](#) of 28 September was unanimous on the constitutionality of the new method. However, one-third of the judges dissented on the constitutionality of the early termination.

Long-standing ODIHR and Venice Commission recommendations for addressing key shortcomings in the legal framework remain unaddressed.¹⁹ Further, the legislation contains various gaps and ambiguities, and it does not address essential aspects for holding presidential run-off elections.²⁰ Some deadlines set by the law are incompatible with the timing required for second rounds.²¹ Positively, ahead of the first round, the SEC adopted several regulations pertaining to a potential run-off. Despite these efforts, certain issues continued to be unregulated or underregulated.²² Overall, these shortcomings in the legislation negatively impacted legal certainty in key areas of the process, and challenged the stability of the overall legal framework.

The legislation should be amended in line with previous ODIHR recommendations to address substantive shortcomings and gaps, including regulation of a presidential election second round. The amendment process should provide a coherent legal framework, involve inclusive public consultation and seek political consensus.

V. ELECTORAL SYSTEM

The president is directly elected for a five-year term from a single nationwide constituency and may serve up to two terms. A third term is allowed only if an early election is called by the parliament during the second term.²³ If no candidate obtains more than 50 per cent of the valid votes cast, a second round is held two weeks later between the two candidates with the highest number of votes.

Members of the 600-seat unicameral parliament are elected for a five-year term through a proportional system in 87 multi-member constituencies with closed party lists, or as independent candidates.²⁴ Out-of-country ballots do not include independent candidates.²⁵ Pre-electoral coalitions are allowed but parties in a coalition must submit separate candidate lists.²⁶ In line with a long-standing ODIHR and Council of Europe recommendation, the 2022 legal amendments reduced the national threshold for parties and coalitions to qualify for seat allocation from 10 to 7 percent.²⁷ The recently revised mandate

¹⁹ Unaddressed recommendations include the method of seat distribution among constituencies, political party eligibility, the right to vote and to be elected, media freedoms, campaign and campaign finance regulations, non-partisan observation, and election dispute resolution.

²⁰ For instance, legal ambiguities and gaps persist in provisions regulating pre-electoral coalitions; the use of official position and administrative resources by presidential office holders during the campaign; lack of penalties for non-compliance with presidential campaign finance rules; and sanctioning powers for election-related media violations. Concerning the run-offs, aspects such as voter registration, the composition and functioning of the election administration, the regulation of campaigns, including media coverage, out-of-country voting, and the presence of party observers, are not regulated by the law. The only provisions applicable to second rounds set a deadline for withdrawal of second-round candidates and provide that the campaign donation limit applies to both rounds.

²¹ For instance, legislated timelines related to the allocation of campaign places, assignment of free media time slots, and voting abroad are not compatible with the two-week period for second rounds.

²² For instance, regulations adopted by the SEC for the run-off addressed updates to the voter register, set the campaign period, including for the media, and set the dates and locations for out-of-country voting. Remaining shortcomings include the composition and mandate of ballot box committees (BBCs), eligibility for party observers, reallocation of campaign venues and registration for out-of-country and mobile voting.

²³ This amendment came into force on 9 July 2018 after the 2018 general elections.

²⁴ The law provides for compulsory voting in parliamentary elections, subject to a fine, although for many years this provision has not been enforced.

²⁵ Out-of-country votes are distributed to parties in proportion to votes received in each constituency. A SEC regulation provided that the distribution of out-of-country votes to parties takes place prior to the determination of mandates, rather than after determination of any independent seats won. The timing of the allocation of out-of-country party votes disadvantages independent candidates, contrary to Paragraph 7.6 of the 1990 OSCE [Copenhagen Document](#).

²⁶ The ballot format envisaged that votes are cast for a specific political party, not a coalition. Any votes within the coalition not clearly cast for a specific party were allocated to the parties proportionately to the votes cast for them.

²⁷ See Paragraph 34 of the 2022 Venice Commission and ODIHR [Joint Opinion](#), which encourages the Turkish authorities to “consider, after an extensive public debate, the possibility of decreasing the threshold even further.”

allocation method directly assigns mandates to individual parties using the *D'Hondt* method, including those within a coalition. This change might disadvantage smaller parties within coalitions.²⁸

Parliamentary constituencies align with the administrative boundaries of the 81 provinces, except for 4 provinces divided into multiple constituencies.²⁹ In March 2023, the SEC issued a decision on the redistribution of seats among constituencies based on the 2022 population data. The SEC applied the formula required by the law, which significantly undermines the equality of the vote, despite a long-standing ODIHR and Venice Commission recommendation. Consequently, 38 of the 87 electoral constituencies have a deviation of more than 15 per cent from the average number of citizens, with more than half of them above 30 per cent, not in line with international good practice.³⁰

To ensure equality of the vote, the system of seat distribution should be reviewed to address the disproportion of the ratio of voters to parliamentary mandates.

VI. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

Elections were administered by the SEC, 81 provincial electoral councils (PECs), 1,095 district electoral councils (DECs), and 204,353 ballot box committees (BBCs).³¹ The SEC and lower-level councils are composed of or are chaired by senior judges. Eligible political parties could appoint non-voting representatives to the SEC and mid-level councils, and full-right members at district and polling station levels.³² The SEC had no women members. Women comprised some 12 per cent of PEC and DEC membership, presided over 27 per cent of PECs and 46 per cent of DECs. According to IEOM observations on election day, one third of the BBC members and one fourth of the chairpersons were women.

Additional efforts are needed to introduce measures to provide for greater representation of women as chairpersons and members of election administration.

The SEC is a permanent body, consisting of seven regular and four substitute members, appointed for six-year terms.³³ Despite its legally prescribed composition, the SEC functioned as an 11-member body, enabling all substitute members to take part in the decision-making process, contrary to a previous ODIHR recommendation.³⁴ While the SEC is mandated to oversee and regulate the electoral process, it did not adequately supplement the legislation for these elections. Most of its regulations merely

²⁸ Previously, seats were first allocated within constituencies among pre-electoral coalitions, individual parties, and independent candidates, and then the seats allocated to pre-electoral coalitions were distributed among its constituent parties. See also paragraph 16 of the 2022 Venice Commission and ODIHR [Joint Opinion](#).

²⁹ Constituencies have between 1 and 36 seats. Istanbul and Ankara have 3 constituencies, and İzmir and Bursa 2.

³⁰ For example, the deviation was 67 per cent in Güzce and 49 per cent in Osmaniye. Paragraph I.2.2.iv of the 2002 Venice Commission [Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters](#) (Code of Good Practice) recommends that the permissible departure from the norm should not exceed 15 per cent except in special circumstances.

³¹ This includes 11,212 BBCs set up for voters abroad, 332 BBCs in prisons and 924 BBCs conducting mobile voting.

³² Political parties with a parliamentary group and the top four parties from the previous elections can each nominate a non-voting representative to the SEC. The non-voting representatives of the SEC during the general elections included representatives from AK Parti, CHP, HDP, *İyi Party*, and MHP. Fulfilling eligibility criteria in regard to organizational structure and prior electoral results at the provincial and district levels is required for membership in lower-level councils and committees; however, the membership for lower-level councils ends if a party does not run in the upcoming elections. In April 2023, HDP lost its right to be represented in electoral councils, except for the SEC, as it decided not to run in the general elections.

³³ Six members are appointed from Supreme Court of Appeals judges, and five from the Council of State. Substitute members are selected by a draw. Six current SEC members were appointed in January 2020, and five in January 2023.

³⁴ A *quorum* is the majority of seven members, except for decisions related to election results, which require all seven members to participate. The SEC did not make public which judges were selected as substitute and regular members.

repeated existing legal provisions, prompting PECs and DEC members to frequently seek additional guidance from the SEC and resulting in varied interpretations of some procedures.³⁵

To ensure a comprehensive and cohesive legal framework for the elections, the SEC should adopt regulations that sufficiently supplement all aspects of the election legislation.

PECs are comprised of three judges. DEC members, with seven members, are chaired by a judge and comprise of two civil servants and four political party nominees. The 2022 legal amendments altered the selection method of PEC and DEC members from the judiciary and resulted in the re-composition of all PECs and DEC members in July 2022.³⁶ BBCs consist of a chairperson, a member from civil services, and five political party representatives, who are appointed prior to each election to administer election-day procedures in polling stations.³⁷ Many BBCs were appointed after the legal deadline, as numerous DEC members had difficulties assigning staff due to a lack of nominations from political parties.³⁸ In the absence of a legal provision on the matter, the SEC considered the term of all BBCs *de facto* extended for the run-off.

The election administration efficiently managed the preparations for the elections and complied with most deadlines, despite significant challenges posed by the earthquakes, a compressed timeline for holding two parallel contests and the short time available for the implementation of the run-off.³⁹ The SEC enjoyed stakeholders' trust in its technical capacity to manage the process, but public confidence in its independence varied, due to low trust in the judiciary, and some of its decisions.⁴⁰ Moreover, the work of electoral bodies lacked transparency at all levels, and the information shared about the electoral process with the public was limited. Sessions of electoral councils were not open to the public, and the SEC only published some 10 per cent of its decisions, despite its legal obligation, and did not consistently publish decisions related to complaints and objections which raised concerns of arbitrary decision-making (see *Election Dispute Resolution*).⁴¹

In order to enhance transparency and increase public trust, election administration bodies should hold sessions open to the public and publish information of public interest in a timely and consistent manner, including all agendas, decisions and detailed data on complaints and objections.

Mandatory training was only provided to BBC members from the civil service. Training sessions observed by the ODIHR EOM were informative but not fully comprehensive, and the format often missed interactivity and practical exercises for facilitating the understanding of key procedures. While the primary responsibility for training party-nominated members rested with the nominating parties,

³⁵ Such SEC regulations included those on parliamentary candidate registration, pre-electoral coalitions, campaign rules, appointment of BBC members and mid-level electoral councils, presence and rights of observers on election day, election-day procedures, and tabulation at DEC members and PECs.

³⁶ The PECs and DEC members are designated for a two-year term. As per the new method, PEC and DEC judiciary members are selected through a lottery process from a pool of first-class judges, instead of the previous method of automatic assignment based on seniority in the respective area. Some IEOM interlocutors voiced concerns that the new appointment procedure may increase susceptibility of the members with limited experience to political influence.

³⁷ The eligible parties must have established local branches, be one of the five parties that received the highest number of votes in the last general elections in the district, and must have nominated candidate lists for the upcoming elections.

³⁸ BBCs for out-of-country voting were appointed by 12 April; in-country BBCs by 24 April. The affected political parties cited insufficient capacity and low interest in participation. Some political parties replaced some of their appointed BBC members for the run-off election day due to unsatisfactory performance during the first round.

³⁹ The SEC experienced delays in finalizing voter lists and identifying polling station locations, with DEC members in some instances appointing BBC members past the legal deadline. The announcement of the final results of the parliamentary elections was postponed beyond the deadline previously established by the SEC.

⁴⁰ Many IEOM interlocutors noted that the 2019 SEC decision on invalidating the results of the Istanbul mayoral race and the registration of the incumbent as candidate in the 2023 process contributed to limited trust in its independence.

⁴¹ By law, PECs and DEC members are not required to make their decisions public. The SEC did not systematically collect data from the lower-level electoral councils, including on objections and complaints (see *Election Dispute Resolution*). According to SEC, the decisions they considered to be of public importance were published.

these members also had the option to participate in the training or access materials online. Insufficient training of BBC members, in some instances, resulted in irregularities on election days and inconsistent implementation of the election process (*see Election Day*). Despite procedural shortcomings identified, there were no follow-up training sessions prior to the run-off.⁴² PECs and DECAs, including newly appointed members, did not receive any training, leading to inconsistent application of some provisions.⁴³

To ensure consistency in the implementation of the election process, the SEC should arrange timely, comprehensive, standardized and compulsory training for all members of PECs, DECAs and BBCs, including members appointed by political parties.

The election administration carried out a limited voter education campaign during the first round through broadcast media and printed materials, focusing on changes in voter registration data, arrangements for voters with disabilities, ballot validity, and voting modalities. Despite prior ODIHR recommendation, materials were only available in Turkish language, missing the opportunity to make information more accessible to voters with different mother tongues.⁴⁴ Positively, all audio-visual voter education material included sign-language interpretation.

In response to the February earthquakes, the election administration transferred several DECAs and BBCs to alternative or temporary premises. Upon requests from governors and DECAs, the SEC further relocated or merged 861 polling stations across 28 provinces, mainly in some southern and south-eastern provinces, citing security concerns, inadequate premises, or sparse population. While the law only specifies a time limit for governors and provincial election boards to make requests, and not for the SEC to make a decision, many of these latter changes, which potentially affected 57,170 voters' ability to vote, were executed less than one month before the election." Some ODIHR EOM interlocutors raised concerns about potential political motivations behind the decisions of relocating, alleging that affected voters were not timely informed.⁴⁵

Early voting was made available to 3.38 million voters registered abroad. Out-of-country polling stations were established in 167 localities across 73 countries from 27 April to 9 May and 20 to 24 May. Voters registered abroad could also vote at 46 customs gates in Türkiye from 27 April to 14 May and from 20 to 28 May. Votes from abroad were counted centrally in Ankara by specially designated counting committees under the overseas DEC. To address instances of overcrowding observed in the first round, the SEC increased the number of polling stations in 15 countries for the run-off. However, it also shortened voting periods in five countries, prompting allegations over political motivation for differing approaches in different countries. In a positive development, following an official request from CHP, the SEC largely reverted to the initially planned voting periods.⁴⁶

⁴² The ODIHR EOM was informed that brief training sessions were conducted by DECAs for those BBC members who were newly appointed from the civil service due to resignations between the two rounds.

⁴³ For instance, ODIHR EOM observers reported differing interpretations by DECAs of legal provisions regarding BBC member appointment procedures and political party representation in DECAs and BBCs. Additionally, inconsistent rulings were observed when dealing with post-election complaints on the same subject matter.

⁴⁴ The Association for Monitoring Equal Rights (AMER) repeatedly asked for voter education materials in different languages to facilitate access to information for illiterate and non-Turkish-speaking voters; all these requests were denied.

⁴⁵ According to the SEC, there were several objections against the merging of polling stations, all of which were rejected.

⁴⁶ For Australia, Canada, the UK, and the USA, the SEC planned to reduce the scheduled 5-day voting period to 2 days; for Ireland and Japan, the plan was to shorten the 3-day period to 2 days. Opposition parties highlighted that tens of thousands of voters from these countries participated in the first round and a majority, up to 80 per cent in certain places, voted for the opposition. Upon reconsideration of its initial plan, only the decision pertaining to Japan remained valid.

VII. VOTER REGISTRATION

Citizens over 18 years of age have the right to vote, except for those declared legally incompetent by a court, prisoners convicted of intentional crimes regardless of the severity, conscripts and students in military schools. These restrictions on suffrage rights are contrary to OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards and the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights.⁴⁷ Positively, on 13 March, the SEC clarified that all convicts outside of prison are permitted to vote, irrespective of whether their sentence was fully executed.

As previously recommended, the voting rights of students in military schools and conscripts should be reinstated and restrictions on prisoners' voting rights should be proportionate to the crime committed. The election legislation should be harmonized with the objectives of CRPD to ensure full voting rights for persons with intellectual disabilities.

Voter registration is passive and continuous. The central voter register is maintained by the SEC, based on the civil and address registers. By 20 March, voter lists were displayed for scrutiny at local government offices, enabling voters to verify their information and request amendments until 2 April. In the absence of legal provisions for updating the voter register before the run-off, the SEC issued a regulation for updates by 19 May.⁴⁸ The SEC granted access to the voter lists to eligible political parties prior to both rounds, enhancing transparency. While most ODIHR EOM interlocutors did not express concerns about the overall accuracy of the voter register, some noted that voter lists might contain voters missing (but not declared deceased) due to the earthquakes, impacting its accuracy.

By law, individuals who have relocated, including those displaced by earthquakes, could vote by returning to their permanent residences. Alternatively, they could register at their displacement location, enabling them to vote for parties and candidates in their new places of residence. Insufficient measures were taken by the authorities to facilitate changes of address and voting for the estimated 2 million voters affected by the earthquakes.⁴⁹ Numerous ODIHR EOM political party and civil society interlocutors proposed that a longer period for address changes, free transportation, or other alternative measures could have eased voting for those affected by the earthquakes. In addition, after a suspension exceeding one month, the Council of Higher Education resumed in-person higher education nationwide on 30 March; the announcement shortly before the close of the registration period left students with a limited three-day period to register for voting at their study locations.⁵⁰ Despite some CSOs and political parties providing free transportation for citizens, displaced by the earthquakes, to vote at their permanent residences, many of them faced significant challenges returning to vote.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Paragraph 7.3 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) calls on participating States to “guarantee universal and equal suffrage to adult citizens”, while paragraph 24 provides that restrictions on rights and freedoms must be “strictly proportionate to the aim of the law”. Article 12 of the 2006 UN [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (CRPD) provides for the equal recognition of persons with disabilities before the law. Article 29 requires States to “guarantee to persons with disabilities political rights and the opportunity to enjoy them on an equal basis with others”. See also ECtHR, *Söyler v. Turkey*, no. 29411/07, judgment of 20 January 2013; *Murat Vural v. Turkey*, no. 9540/07, judgment of 21 October 2014.

⁴⁸ Some 48,000 voters who turned 18 years of age between the two rounds, and individuals released from prison were added to the voter register. Individuals deprived of their citizenship and voters who passed away remained on the voter lists, annotated with “cannot vote”. There was no public scrutiny before the second round.

⁴⁹ On 13 March, the SEC adopted a provision allowing earthquake-affected voters staying in temporary shelters to register at a technical address provided by municipalities without additional supporting documentation. According to the Ministry of Interior, around 453,000 citizens, 70 per cent of whom were of voting age, had changed their addresses from the earthquake-affected areas to register in other provinces.

⁵⁰ On 20 February, in-person higher education was suspended nationwide to ensure that dormitories were available to provide shelter for persons displaced by the earthquakes. There are around 3,8 million university students in Türkiye.

⁵¹ Political parties and CSOs informed the ODIHR EOM that their capabilities to provide transportation were financially and operationally constrained. By law, providing transportation is not illegal, unless provided in exchange of votes.

Consideration could be given to extending the period for scrutiny of voter lists, bringing the deadline for changes closer to election day, and to simplify procedures to facilitate voter participation.

According to the authorities, the final number of registered voters was 60,721,745 in-country and 3,423,759 abroad. Additional voter lists were compiled for 53,185 detained and eligible imprisoned voters. Mobile voting was made available to 11,196 homebound voters in urban areas only, excluding those residing in rural locations, despite requests by CSOs. No provisions were made to provide for voting at places of temporary stay, such as women's shelters and hospitals, despite a prior ODIHR recommendation.

VIII. PARTY AND CANDIDATE REGISTRATION

Presidential candidates must be at least 40 years of age with a higher education. Parliamentary candidates must have a primary education and be at least 18 years old. The legislation retains excessive restrictions on candidacy rights for individuals declared legally incompetent by a court, barred from public service, conscripted to military service, or convicted of a broad range of crimes. Revoked candidacy rights may only be reinstated by a court decision under certain conditions.⁵² These restrictions, with the exception of the age requirement, are at odds with the principles of non-discrimination and proportionality provided for in the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document and international standards.⁵³

The discriminatory candidate eligibility requirements should be reviewed in line with international standards and commitments. The conditions for revocation and restitution of candidacy rights of convicts should be proportional to the crime committed.

Presidential candidates can be nominated by parliamentary groups or parties that obtained at least five per cent of the votes in the previous elections; parliamentary candidates can be nominated by political parties deemed eligible by the SEC. Citizens may also run as independent candidates upon a deposit.⁵⁴ Independent presidential candidacies must further be supported by at least 100,000 signatures from voters, collected within a limited six-day period. Voters could sign in support of only one contestant, which is contrary to international good practice.⁵⁵

The legislation does not allow the formation of political parties to represent regional or ethnic interests, limiting freedom of association.⁵⁶ To participate in parliamentary elections, parties must have established organizational structures in at least half the provinces and one-third of districts, and must

⁵² Candidacy rights of convicts might be restored after a three-year period following the full execution of a sentence, upon a proof of living a "good life". Following a 15-year period, convicts' criminal records are expunged.

⁵³ In paragraph 7.5 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#), participating States committed "to respect the right of citizens to seek political or public office, individually or as representatives of political parties or organizations, without discrimination". Paragraph 15 of the [General Comment No. 25](#) to Article 25 of the 1960 ICCPR "states that persons who are otherwise eligible to stand for election should not be excluded by unreasonable or discriminatory requirements such as education, residence or descent, or by reason of political affiliation."

⁵⁴ The deposit amounts to TRY 555,980 for the presidential election and TRY 55,598 for parliamentary elections. The deposit is refundable to successfully registered presidential candidates and to parliamentary candidates if elected.

⁵⁵ Paragraph 196 of the 2020 [ODIHR and Venice Commission Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#) recommends that "a requirement that a citizen be allowed to sign in support of only one party should be avoided, as such a regulation would affect his/her right to freedom of association and could easily disqualify parties".

⁵⁶ See paragraph 7.6 of the 1990 [OSCE Copenhagen Document](#). Paragraph 102 of the 2020 [ODIHR and Venice Commission Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#) recommends that "[p]rovisions regarding the limitation of political parties purely on the grounds that they represent a limited geographic area should generally be removed from relevant legislation. Requirements barring contestation for parties with only regional support potentially discriminate against parties that enjoy a strong public following only in a particular area of the country."

have convened congresses at least six months prior to election day. The 2022 legal amendments mandated that parties convene congresses at the national, provincial and district levels, and prohibited them from bypassing more than one congress within a set period.⁵⁷ To register, parties running outside coalitions are required to submit full candidate lists in at least half of the provinces. These requirements, in conjunction with the required broad organizational structure, challenge the principle of proportionality and equal treatment with respect to newly established parties.⁵⁸

In line with international standards and good practice, the legislative requirements for formation of political parties and on eligibility of political parties to contest the elections should be reviewed to enhance respect for freedom of association and promote pluralism.

Among 126 political parties in the register, 36 were found to be eligible for the elections by the SEC. Subsequently, parties formed five pre-electoral coalitions.⁵⁹ The SEC registered four presidential candidates and 1,849 parliamentary candidate lists from 24 political parties and 151 independent parliamentary candidates.⁶⁰ There are no gender quota or placement requirements for candidate lists, and only a few parties implemented internal policies in this respect.⁶¹ Of the 13,037 parliamentary candidates, 25 per cent were women.⁶² Women led 327 (18 per cent) of the candidate lists. Eleven women (7 per cent) stood as independent candidates.⁶³ None of the presidential candidates was a woman. There is no disaggregated data on the participation of youth as candidates and youth were underrepresented in the out-going parliament with only five MPs under the age of 30.

Consideration could be given to introducing temporary special legislative measures to promote women candidates, including gender quotas and requirements for placing women in winnable positions. Additionally, political parties should consider taking voluntary measures to promote greater

⁵⁷ The Law on Political Parties stipulates the periodicity for the national congresses within a minimum of two and maximum of three years.

⁵⁸ Paragraph 7.6 of the 1990 [OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) states that “Participating States will respect the right of individuals and groups to establish, in full freedom, their own political parties or other political organizations and provide such political parties and organizations with the necessary legal guarantees to enable them to compete with each other on a basis of equal treatment before the law and by the authorities.” See also the comments made by the Venice Commission and ODIHR in their 2022 Joint Opinion. Paragraph 151 of the OSCE/ODIHR and Venice Commission guidelines on political party regulation stipulates that “internal functions and processes of political parties should generally be free from state interference. Internal political party functions are best regulated through the party constitutions or voluntary codes of conduct elaborated and agreed on by the parties themselves.”

⁵⁹ Several political parties opted to include candidates from allied parties that decided not to submit separate candidate lists, thus *de facto* circumventing the ban on proposing the joint candidate lists. The candidate lists of CHP also comprised candidates from DEVA, DP, SP and GP. The AK Parti lists included some candidates of *Hüda-Par*. Although the law does not require concurrent standing of coalition parties in each constituency, the SEC decided not to allow the Nation Alliance to use the coalition name on ballots in 16 constituencies where only one of the allied parties was running.

⁶⁰ The SEC registered as presidential candidates the incumbent Recep Tayyip Erdoğan nominated by AK Parti and MHP, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu nominated by CHP and *İyi Parti*, and Muharrem İnce and Sinan Oğan standing as independent candidates. The SEC rejected the registration of seven prospective presidential candidates and eight independent parliamentary candidates for not fulfilling the registration requirements, and nine presidential candidates for falling short of the required support signatures. One party was denied registration due to late submission of registration documents and one on the grounds of not submitting candidate lists in the required number of provinces. Five parties lost the right to stand in some constituencies due to failure to remove deficiencies in their registration documentations. On 11 May, Mr. İnce announced his withdrawal. However, since the law does not regulate such actions, Mr. İnce’s name remained on the ballot.

⁶¹ The CHP implemented a zipper system of two female and one male candidate in major cities, while YSP applied a 50 per cent quota for all of its candidate lists. *İyi Parti* reported a requirement of 25 per cent, and DEVA Parti a 35 per cent quota for women.

⁶² According to ODIHR EOM’s calculations based on the number of seats political parties obtained in the 2018 elections, AK Parti had 56 woman candidates in winnable positions, YSP had 27, CHP 26, *İyi Parti* 5, and MHP 2.

⁶³ YSP and Left Party (Sol) had the highest number, 35 women each on the top of lists, with TİP and the Rights and Freedoms Party (HAK-PAR) having 27 each. CHP had 11 women on top, *İyi Parti* 9, and AK Parti 4.

participation of women in their parties, including to assess the barriers to women's participation, and address all forms of gender-based discrimination.

The technical registration process of candidates managed by the SEC was inclusive. However, dissolution proceedings against the second largest opposition party obstructed its participation, and the criminal prosecution of certain opposition politicians might have hindered their candidacy. Moreover, the SEC did not publish most decisions related to candidate registration, detracting from transparency. The registration of the incumbent president was formally challenged by more than 200 stakeholders, asserting that he was running for an unconstitutional third term.⁶⁴ The SEC dismissed these challenges on the grounds that the first presidential term of the incumbent between 2014 and 2018 did not fall under the two-term limit, since it occurred under the previous parliamentary system.⁶⁵

IX. ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN

The legal framework established two periods for campaigning: the electoral period, commencing on 18 March for parliamentary elections and 31 March for the presidential election, during which certain campaign regulations applied, including a ban on misuse of administrative resources, and the formal campaign period, which lasted for 10 days prior to both election days, and in which campaigning was subject to stricter requirements.⁶⁶ Despite a previous ODIHR recommendation, the formal campaign period remains unduly short, leaving most of the *de facto* campaign period underregulated.

The elections offered voters a genuine choice between political alternatives. In the campaign, fundamental freedoms were generally respected, with some notable exceptions. Representatives of HDP and YSP faced pervasive pressure and intimidation targeting their campaign events and supporters, and involving systematic detentions.⁶⁷ The ODIHR EOM did not observe any restrictions on freedoms resulting from the state of emergency introduced after the earthquakes. However, the governors' use of authority to limit rights and freedoms for anti-terrorism purposes did affect campaign opportunities in

⁶⁴ The SEC published only four decisions related to an undisclosed number of objections against the eligibility of three presidential candidates, all of which were dismissed. Further, four objections were filed against the registration of Mr. Kılıçdaroğlu and one against that of Mr. İnce; the grounds for objections were not disclosed by the SEC. Two prospective presidential candidates objected the rejection of their registration. Twelve objections were filed against parliamentary candidates claiming that ministers standing for the elections should have resigned and other candidates had not met the eligibility criteria. All these objections were rejected.

⁶⁵ The Constitution does not explicitly include an exception to the two-term limit for presidential terms served under the parliamentary system that ended in 2017.

⁶⁶ In the 10-day period, the law bans public ceremonies and speeches, statements and publications on government works; ministers and members of parliament are not allowed to use public vehicles and civil servants on campaign tours. A silence period was in place from 18:00 on 13 May and 27 May until each election day.

⁶⁷ Detentions targeting YSP and HDP supporters included a 25 April anti-terror police operation, in which 216 detentions were made across 20 provinces in the South-East of the country; a 30 April operation in İzmir, Eskişehir, and Istanbul; and a 23 May anti-terror operation across 11 provinces, in which at least 69 individuals, including executives from HDP and members of YSP, were detained as part of investigations by the chief prosecutor's offices in Mardin, Tekirdağ, and Mersin. The 1990 OSCE [Copenhagen Document](#) provides for "law and public policy work to permit political campaigning to be conducted in a fair and free atmosphere in which neither administrative action, violence nor intimidation bars the parties and the candidates from freely presenting their views and qualifications".

some provinces during the first round.⁶⁸ Some additional cases of interfering with freedom of expression were observed, targeting opposition parties, candidates and supporters.⁶⁹

Authorities should take necessary measures to ensure that campaigning is conducted in an atmosphere free from intimidation and fear of retribution and in an environment where fundamental freedoms are fully respected.

Campaign periods were largely peaceful, with some incidents before the first election day.⁷⁰ In the first round, most contestants conducted robust campaigns, featuring rallies, billboards and posters, door-to-door canvassing and distribution of leaflets. The campaign for the presidential run-off was more restrained, concentrating on local-level voter mobilization.⁷¹ The campaign was highly polarized and often inflammatory in tone, with mutual accusations of association with terrorism.⁷² Prominent campaign topics included the economy, national security, and earthquake reconstruction efforts. Several high-ranking officials made discriminatory statements regarding the LGBTI community and associated it with the main opposition alliance.⁷³ The run-off campaign featured harsh rhetoric against migrants and Syrian refugees, especially from the opposition, often calling for their deportation.⁷⁴

While the legislation imposes some restrictions during the official campaign period, it lacks adequate safeguards to prevent state and local office holders from misusing administrative resources for electoral purposes. The president is not explicitly subject to the same legal restrictions as other high level public

⁶⁸ Citing anti-terrorism and public security, Siirt had a recurring ban on public assemblies and written material distribution from 30 April to 3 May. A five-day ban in Şanlıurfa, effective on April 1, reportedly led to a YSP campaign office opening being disbanded. Additionally, a special security zone in Şırnak, active from 1-15 May, restricted movement.

⁶⁹ For instance, the General Prosecutor of Diyarbakır initiated an investigation on 10 April into all speeches given at a YSP campaign event, to determine whether any speeches contained “terrorist propaganda.” The same day in Bursa, a CHP youth activist was detained, accused crimes insulting the president by attributing high inflation to the current president through stickers on shop products; the individual was subsequently released. On 25 May, the Minister of Interior accused at least seven individuals of supporting terrorist organizations during a campaign event; these individuals were subsequently detained. At a 26 May, Istanbul AK Parti campaign event, an individual had an altercation with the police for making a heart shape with his hands, a gesture associated with Mr. Kılıçdaroğlu.”

⁷⁰ These included shots fired at the headquarters of *İyi Parti* in Istanbul on 31 March; outside CHP’s Istanbul provincial directorate on 6 April, and an empty AK Parti office building in Adana on 20 April. On 7 May, Istanbul mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu’s campaign event in Erzurum was attacked with stones and CHP candidates were attacked in Trabzon, and YSP candidates and their vehicle were attacked in Mersin.

⁷¹ ODIHR EOM long-term observers (LTOs) observed 85 campaign events over the two rounds. Of these, 79 were accessible to individuals with physical disabilities. Kurdish was utilized in 10 events, and sign-language interpretation was provided twice.

⁷² For example, on 26 April, MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli referred to the Nation Alliance as “an alliance of terrorism”; on 27 April, the Minister of Justice stated that “each vote cast for the Nation Alliance will breathe new life into terrorism”; in a 15 May speech, the President claimed: “We were not with those who received instructions [from PKK]. We take instruction only from our Allah and our nation”. In a 18 May statement, Mr. Kılıçdaroğlu accused the President of negotiating with terrorists; and in a 20 May statement, *İyi Parti* chairperson Meral Akşener accused the People’s Alliance of ‘leaning on PKK and Hezbollah’.

⁷³ In a 22 April speech in Gaziantep, the President said: “14 May is against LGBT people” and on 22 May, he promised a “fight against deviant tendencies such as LGBTI that threaten our family structure” On 22 May, the Minister of Interior stated in a Twitter post that the parliamentary election was won by those who said ‘No to [PKK], no to LGBTI’.

⁷⁴ On 20 May, the *İyi Parti* chairperson called for voting for those who “refuse to be Europe’s migrant ditch, and will return asylum seekers to their countries within two years at the latest.” On 24 May, a Twitter post by the leader of the Victory Party stated: “Syrians will go [...]. anyone who thinks Turkey is the world’s amusement park, treats our women as concubines, turns our streets into drug havens, organizes Salafi jihadists and consumes 11 billion dollars a year, will go”. On 25 May, Mr. Kılıçdaroğlu, in a video shared on Twitter, stated that if the current government remains in power, “irregulars, asylum seekers will turn into potential crime machines. Looting will start.”

officials.⁷⁵ In both electoral periods, the President often campaigned while performing official duties. Inaugurations of numerous large-scale infrastructure projects were also utilized by several incumbents for campaigning.⁷⁶ At odds with international good practice, significant social benefit programmes were announced or implemented during this period.⁷⁷ Some other instances of misuse of administrative resources in the campaign were observed.⁷⁸ These practices provided undue advantage of incumbency and blurred the line between party and State, at odds with paragraph 5.4 of the 1990 Copenhagen Document.⁷⁹

To ensure conditions for an equitable campaign environment, consideration could be given to provide that all campaign prohibitions, including the misuse of administrative resources, apply from the calling of the elections. The law should ensure equal application of campaign rules to all contestants, and regulate that the incumbent president should not enjoy undue advantages. Authorities should put in place measures to ensure a clear separation between the State and party to prevent candidates from using the advantage of their office for electoral purposes, including an effective sanctioning mechanism against the misuse of administrative resources, and undertake effective campaign oversight by conducting thorough investigations of all campaign-related offences.

During the electoral period, the ODIHR EOM monitored the activities of 35 political actors on *Twitter* and *Facebook*. All contestants actively engaged online, reflecting their offline campaigns and frequently using inflammatory language. The content typically consisted of videos and texts, with some photographs. AK Parti was the most active online, posting up to 20 times per day. In the run-off period, the focus shifted to the election results, accompanied by self-evaluation of parties. Concerns regarding

⁷⁵ The authorities informed the ODIHR EOM that existing restrictions are intended to apply to incumbent presidents due to analogous provisions in other laws that apply to ministers and members of the parliament. Paragraph II. B. 1.1 of the 2016 ODIHR and Venice Commission's [Joint Guidelines on Preventing and Responding to the Misuse of Administrative Resources during Electoral Processes](#) (Guidelines) states that the law "should provide effective mechanisms for prohibiting public authorities from taking unfair advantages of their positions by holding official public events for electoral campaigning purposes, including charitable events, or events that favour or disfavour any political party or candidate". See also the comments made by the Venice Commission and ODIHR in their 2022 [Joint Opinion](#).

⁷⁶ On 13 April, at the ground-breaking ceremony of public housing for earthquake victims in Malatya, the President accused the opposition of incompetence and terrorist affiliations. At the opening of the Blue Mosque in Istanbul on 21 April, the President stated that the opposition will be "buried in the upcoming elections as politically dead". On 12 April, at the inauguration of a road in Ankara by the CHP mayor, CHP presidential and party campaign material was displayed. On 19 May, at a wreath-laying ceremony in Istanbul, CHP mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu criticized the government. At a 19 May commemoration event, Ankara Metropolitan CHP Mayor Mansur Yavaş stated, in reference to the government: "They turned our cities into weapons depots for terrorists."

⁷⁷ On 20 April at a public ceremony, the President pledged to provide households with natural gas for free for a year. He announced on 24 April the expansion of tax exemptions for bazaar traders, and an exemption on special consumption tax for vehicles and certain online platform sales. On 1 May, he further promised to increase pensions following the rises in April. On 9 May, the President announced a 45 per cent increase in the wage of over 700,000 public servants. Paragraph II. B. 1.3 of the [Guidelines](#) recommends that "no major announcements linked to or aimed at creating a favourable perception towards a given party or candidate should occur during campaigns".

⁷⁸ Free municipal transportation was provided to voters for AK Parti rallies in Antalya, Erzurum, Gaziantep, Samsun and Sivas. The websites of the Presidency and the Directorate of Communications under the Presidency published presidential campaign speeches.

⁷⁹ Paragraph 5.4 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) calls for "a clear separation between the State and political parties. Paragraph II. B. 1.1 of the [Guidelines](#) stipulates that "the legal framework should provide effective mechanisms for prohibiting public authorities from taking unfair advantages of their positions by holding official public events for electoral campaigning purposes".

the use of disinformation in the campaign, including online, were raised both by the ruling parties and the opposition.⁸⁰

Overall, women's visibility in the campaign was limited, with the notable exception of Meral Akşener, the chairperson of *İyi Parti*.⁸¹ In the first round, some political parties, such as CHP, DEVA, *İyi Parti*, and YSP promoted women's equality and efforts to combat gender-based violence. In the second round, women's rights were a focus of Mr. Kılıçdaroğlu's campaign, while the incumbent highlighted his party's achievements in promoting women's political participation. Of concern, some women politicians mentioned to the ODIHR EOM instances of harassment while campaigning, based on their gender.⁸²

X. CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Campaign finance is regulated by the Law on Political Parties and the Law on Presidential Elections and supplemented by SEC regulations. The legislation does not contain comprehensive regulations on party and campaign finance. Campaign spending online is not regulated.⁸³ Most long-standing ODIHR and the Council of Europe's GRECO recommendations remain unaddressed. These include the introduction of spending limits, enhancing transparency and improving the effectiveness of the oversight mechanism.⁸⁴ Due to the absence of interim campaign finance reports, voters had limited information about campaign incomes and expenditures before election day, at odds with a prior ODIHR recommendation. These shortcomings significantly decreased stakeholders' trust in the integrity and accountability of the regulatory system.

Presidential candidates are not entitled to public funding. To support their campaigns, they may receive individual donations from Turkish citizens up to TRY 55,598 per donor per round.⁸⁵ Political parties that received at least three per cent of votes in the previous parliamentary elections receive annual public funding proportional to their vote share. This funding is tripled in election years, amounting to a total

⁸⁰ According to media reports, on 27 April, an Istanbul printing house produced fake CHP leaflets and stickers suggesting that the party co-operates with terrorist organizations. On 26 April, the Communications Director of the Presidency expressed concerns about the spread of fake news related to the President's health. On 2 May, Mr. Kılıçdaroğlu raised allegations of online manipulation by the authorities to discredit his campaign. The ruling coalition criticized the announcements made by CHP representatives on the first election night, which claimed that the opposition candidate was on the brink of winning the presidential race, labelling these claims as an attempt at manipulation. In a 15 May statement, the AK Parti spokesperson accused CHP of manipulating the data flow on election night; the same day, the incumbent accused the opposition of intentionally misleading the public. In the run-off, Mr. Kılıçdaroğlu filed a lawsuit against the incumbent for defamation related to a doctored video that falsely showed him campaigning with terrorists.

⁸¹ Of 85 campaign events observed by ODIHR EOM, 33 featured women speakers, with a total of 76 female speakers versus a total of 267 male speakers. In campaign events observed, women's participation rate averaged 39.8 per cent.

⁸² Some female YSP candidates reported to the ODIHR EOM the need to have male party members or supporters with them for protection during campaigning or not daring to campaign actively for fear of being harassed.

⁸³ Based on data from [META Ad Library](#), the ODIHR EOM calculated that from 1 April to 27 May, presidential candidates and political parties spent a combined maximum of TRY 10,840,712 on Facebook and Instagram advertisements. Ranges provided by META Ad Library indicate that spending on political advertisements from official party or presidential candidate accounts in this period was highest for Mr. Erdoğan's account (TRY 2.8-3.3 million) and AK Parti (TRY 2.3-2.8 million). MHP spent TRY 1.5 million to 1.8 million, and Mr. Kılıçdaroğlu's account spent TRY 1.2 million to 1.4 million. EUR 1 equals some 22 TRY (Turkish Lira).

⁸⁴ Paragraph 34 of the GRECO's 2020 [Second Addendum to the Second Compliance Report on Turkey](#) states that the "current situation is not satisfactory; considerable progress is yet to be made in respect of transparency of political financing in Turkey".

⁸⁵ The law does not restrict presidential candidates from receiving funding from their nominating parties or using their own funds. The maximum amount of permitted donations equals the monthly gross salary of the most senior public servant.

of TRY 4.5 billion in 2023.⁸⁶ There is no separate public funding for the election campaign of parties which are not receiving annual subsidies, potentially disproportionately disadvantaging parties that are contesting for the first time.⁸⁷

Parties may also finance their campaigns through membership fees or private donations, subject to an annual limit of TRY 221,591 per eligible donor.⁸⁸ Donations from most legal entities, state and public organizations, and foreign sources are prohibited. Commercial activities and loans are not allowed. Party and campaign donations and expenditures must be made through dedicated bank accounts.⁸⁹ Notwithstanding a previous ODIHR recommendation, there is no ceiling for annual party and campaign-related expenditures, this favours larger parties and affects the level playing field.⁹⁰

The law does not envisage proactive oversight from relevant authorities. Presidential candidates must submit campaign finance reports to the SEC within 10 days of the announcement of the final election results.⁹¹ The SEC publishes audit results within one month of the audit's completion. Political parties declare their campaign funds through annual financial reports submitted to the Constitutional Court, which do not include candidate and third-party incomes.⁹² Currently, there is a considerable delay in publishing the auditing results, limiting transparency.⁹³ Independent parliamentary candidates report their campaign funds through personal tax declarations. Breaches of parliamentary campaign finance rules can lead to warnings, fines, imprisonment of up to three years, and party dissolution. The law does not establish sanctions for non-compliance with presidential campaign finance rules.

To align the campaign finance framework with international good practice and GRECO recommendations, authorities should address noted gaps and ambiguities. In particular, the authorities could consider establishing periodic, timely and transparent reporting of campaign contributions and expenditures, timely publishing of such reports including before election day, and providing a clear oversight and monitoring mandate to a qualified independent institution. Furthermore, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions for breaches of campaign finance regulations could be introduced.

⁸⁶ Patriotic Party lodged a complaint on 17 April with the Constitutional Court demanding that the HDP return the annual public funding it received, on grounds that the party was not running in this election. The case is currently pending.

⁸⁷ Paragraph 232 of the 2020 ODIHR and Venice Commission [Joint Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#) stipulates that the system of public funding “should also aim to ensure that all parties, including opposition parties, small parties and new parties, are able to compete in elections in accordance with the principle of equal opportunities, thereby strengthening political pluralism and helping to ensure the proper functioning of democratic institutions”.

⁸⁸ In addition, eligible donors include certain legal entities, such as professional associations, if their statutes permit it.

⁸⁹ For presidential campaigns, donations above TRY 7,000 are to be deposited on a dedicated account.

⁹⁰ See [General Comment 25 to the ICCPR](#), which underlines that “Reasonable limitations on campaign expenditure may be justified where this is necessary to ensure that the free choice of voters is not undermined or the democratic process distorted by the disproportionate expenditure on behalf of any candidate or party.” Also, see Paragraph 248 of the 2020 [ODIHR and Venice Commission Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#).

⁹¹ The law is unclear on whether presidential candidates are to submit their reports within 10 days after announcement of the final results in the first round or only after the second-round results are finalized. Article 7.3 of the [2003 UN Convention Against Corruption](#) states that “each State Party shall also consider taking appropriate legislative and administrative measures [...] to enhance transparency in the funding of candidatures for elected public office and, where applicable, the funding of political parties.” See also the [2010 OSCE/ODIHR and Venice Commission’s Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#) paragraphs 201-206.

⁹² Paragraph 200 of the [2010 OSCE/ODIHR and Venice Commission’s Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#) states: “Reports on campaign financing should be turned into the proper authorities within a period of no more than 30 days after the elections. The law should define the format of reports so that parties disclose all categories of required information and so that information from the different parties can be compared.”

⁹³ There is no set deadline for publishing the audit reports; the final audits of party financial reports published in 2022 are for the fiscal year of 2020.

XI. MEDIA

A. MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

The media landscape is diverse yet polarized. The media market is skewed by government and state-affiliated advertisements, which disadvantages critical outlets.⁹⁴ The dependency of the main media outlets on public contracts impacts their editorial policies. Journalists, particularly in some south-eastern provinces of the country, frequently faced terrorism charges based on their reporting, including during the electoral period.⁹⁵ Many journalists and media organizations also raised concerns regarding the process of obtaining press cards issued by the President's Communication Directorate, alleging discrimination against oppositional and critical media.⁹⁶

Freedom of expression and the media are constitutionally guaranteed, but some provisions of the Criminal Code, Press Law, anti-terror laws, and other legislation restrict the exercise of these freedoms. Defamation and insult remain criminal offences.⁹⁷ The Penal Code imposes severe penalties for the defamation and insults of public officials and the president, as well as of state institutions and symbols, contrary to international standards.⁹⁸ In October 2022, dissemination of false information was criminalized, contrary to international standards.⁹⁹ The legal definition of false information is overly broad, and the provision is frequently and selectively enforced against critical journalists and users of social networks, as also observed in the electoral period.¹⁰⁰ These restrictions on freedom of expression, combined with cases of arrests and prosecutions of journalists, selective allocation of public advertisements and arbitrary allocation of press cards, contributed to self-censorship, and limited voters' opportunity for making an informed choice.

The legal framework should be revised to align it with international standards on freedom of expression, including the decriminalization of defamation and libel, the abolition of special protection for the

⁹⁴ A [report](#) by the Media4Democracy project found that the opposition-leaning channels *Fox TV, Halk TV, Tele 1* and *KRT* did not receive any public advertising in 2022.

⁹⁵ During the election period, at least 50 people were detained on charges of promoting terrorist organizations based on their reporting or post in the social networks. Furthermore, on 12 April, the Diyarbakır Penal Court accepted the prosecution indictment against 22 individuals, including 20 journalists primarily from pro-Kurdish Mezopotamya Agency. In the case of [Gözel and Özer v. Turkey](#), the ECtHR ruled that the 'automatic' conviction of journalists, based on Anti-Terrorism Law violates Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). In 2021, the OSCE RFoM [called](#) on the authorities "to revise the widely interpreted national anti-terrorism laws in Turkey and bring these in line with OSCE commitments and international standards."

⁹⁶ While journalists are not legally required to possess a press card to carry out their work, in practice, such cards are necessary to access government institutions and record in public areas, including during protests and campaign events. For example, several journalists reported to ODIHR EOM that on 26 April, they were not allowed by the police to attend the rally of the Green Left party in Van, as they did not have press cards.

⁹⁷ According to [statistics](#) by the Ministry of Justice, in 2022, 67,332 criminal cases in relation to the insult of the president and state symbols were initiated and 7,682 prosecuted, including 302 against minors. In its 2016 [opinion](#), the Venice Commission recommended "to completely repeal" the provisions on defamation of the president. See also Paragraph 47 of the [General Comment No 34](#) to the ICCPR calling the states to decriminalize defamation.

⁹⁸ Paragraph 38 of the [General Comment No 34](#) to the ICCPR notes that "All public figures, including those exercising the highest political authority such as heads of state and government, are legitimately subject to criticism and political opposition. [...] States parties should not prohibit criticism of institutions, such as the army or the administration".

⁹⁹ In its October 2022 [Urgent Opinion](#) on the draft amendments, the Venice Commission expressed "serious doubts regarding the necessity in a democratic society of the criminal response to 'false or misleading information envisaged with the draft amendment'", and raised concern with the consequences of such provision. The OSCE RFoM [called](#) on Turkish lawmakers to review the provisions and ensure safeguards for independent journalism and free expression.

¹⁰⁰ During the electoral period, the prosecution opened cases against at least 8 journalists mainly for criticizing the government. Previously, in 2023, at least 10 journalists were investigated due to their criticism of the government's response to the earthquake. On 24 May, the Istanbul Public Prosecutor launched an investigation against 34 people on "dissemination of misleading information" regarding the 14 May election results.

honour of public officials, including the president, the elimination of criminal prosecution for spreading false information, and the liberalization of anti-terrorism laws and their application.

The law permits the removal of online content, including from social networks, at the request of a wide range of administrative and judicial bodies, including the SEC and DECs.¹⁰¹ Moreover, the legislation allows for criminal indictment based on content posted on social networks.¹⁰² On 13 May, *Twitter* and *Facebook* restricted access to some content and user accounts in response to blocking requests from the Turkish authorities.¹⁰³ Several independent online media outlets reported to the ODIHR EOM that the swift process of blocking, coupled with the lack of effective procedures to appeal such decisions, significantly hinders their ability to publish investigative stories.

Any restrictions on access to online content should be based on precise and exhaustive legal grounds and conform to the principles of necessity and proportionality, as outlined in international standards. The power to restrict access should rest exclusively with the judiciary. A register of any blocked websites or social network posts or accounts should be publicly available.

B. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The Constitution guarantees the impartiality of the public broadcaster. The legislation further obliges all media to provide impartial coverage of the campaign and guarantees equal opportunities for the contestants. The Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) is required to provide free airtime to political parties and presidential candidates participating in elections. By law, electoral participants have the right to purchase time for political advertisements under equal terms on both public and private media. However, the CHP filed several complaints against TRT, alleging that the broadcaster failed to provide paid time as per previous agreements. These complaints remained unresolved before the announcement of election results.¹⁰⁴

Overall, media coverage of the campaign lacked effective oversight, and violations did not receive prompt redress. The SEC, which is mandated to supervise the national broadcast media, lacks the authority to impose sanctions. By law, the broadcast media regulator, the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK), is responsible for overseeing impartiality and unbiased coverage. However, in the electoral period, it did not conduct media monitoring, lacked consistency in reviewing official complaints and refrained from acting *ex officio*. The appointment mechanism and resulting dominance of the ruling parties' nominees in the composition of the RTÜK does not ensure the independence of

¹⁰¹ No official data is available on the number of blocked websites and pages. [According](#) to the Free Expression Association, as of 2021, “574,798 websites and domain names have been blocked by [...] 504,700 separate decisions issued by 789 separate institutions”. Paragraph 70 of the 2011 [report](#) of the UN Special Representative on Freedom of Expression calls upon States “to provide lists of blocked websites and full details regarding the necessity and justification for blocking each website.”

¹⁰² Law No. 5651 regulates social network providers, and establishes a mechanism to remove and block access to content published on their platforms. On 21 May, individuals were arrested based on their social network posts about Mr. İnce, on charges of blackmail and unlawful acquisition and dissemination of personal data. Detentions over social media posts include two journalists on 25 April, HDP members on 4 May, several individuals in Bingöl and Ağrı provinces on 26 May during a police operation and one individual in Gaziantep the same day.

¹⁰³ On 13 May, Facebook restricted access to 110 items with content on allegations of corruption and other alleged crimes by the government. On 15 May, Twitter published five court orders and content removal requests from the BTK related to 4 accounts and 409 tweets. Paragraph 15 of the 2011 UNHRC [General Comment No. 34](#) provides: “States parties should take all necessary steps [...] to ensure access of individuals thereto [online media]”. The 2012 UNHRC [Resolution](#) on the promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights on the internet affirms that “the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online, in particular freedom of expression.”

¹⁰⁴ The CHP also informed ODIHR EOM that they were not able to place their political advertisements in the media belonging to the largest media group *Turkuvaz*; however, the party did not file an official complaint on this matter.

the council.¹⁰⁵ In practice, the RTÜK was selective in its review of complaints and disproportionately addressed complaints regarding critical pro-opposition media, a number of which resulted in sanctions.¹⁰⁶ DEC's, although legally required to supervise campaign coverage in regional media and online, were largely unaware of their duties in this regard, as reported by ODIHR EOM observers.

The legal requirements for impartiality and unbiased coverage of contestants should be overseen by an independent media regulatory body, which should proactively ensure effective remedies for violations and act upon all complaints received in a timely manner. Systematic media monitoring throughout the entire campaign period can help the body ensure impartiality requirements are being met. The body should have the authority to issue formal decisions and all decisions should be promptly published.

C. MEDIA MONITORING RESULTS

ODIHR EOM media monitoring results show that the broadcast media did not meet its legal obligation to provide impartial coverage of the campaign and equal opportunities for the contestants.¹⁰⁷ The majority of the monitored broadcasters displayed clear support for Mr. Erdoğan, without separating his activities as a president from those as a candidate. Furthermore, the majority of broadcasters often blurred the distinction between facts and opinions in their news coverage and selectively presented the news to favour their supported candidate. During the first round, campaign activities of Mr. Oğan and Mr. İnce were largely disregarded, with the notable exception of *Kanal D*, which allocated ten per cent of their news coverage to Mr. İnce, which provided him a platform to criticize CHP and Mr. Kılıçdaroğlu.

TRT complied with its legal obligation to provide free time to all contestants, although primarily outside of prime time. Mr. Erdoğan was extensively featured on various broadcasters through live coverage of his campaign rallies, current affairs programmes, and numerous interviews, a possibility that was not extended to his opponents.¹⁰⁸ Despite numerous invitations from Mr. Kılıçdaroğlu, no media debates occurred between presidential candidates, as Mr. Erdoğan declined to participate.

Despite constitutional guarantees of impartiality, public television channels *TRT-1* and *TRT Haber* displayed clear support for the People's Alliance and Mr. Erdoğan, allocating a combined total of 44 and 45 per cent of politically relevant coverage to them, mainly in a positive tone.¹⁰⁹ In contrast, the Nation Alliance and Mr. Kılıçdaroğlu received a combined total of 28 and 25 per cent, while the Labour and Freedom Alliance received 7 and 5 per cent, all predominantly negative in tone.¹¹⁰ Mr. Erdoğan also dominated the campaign coverage in the second round, receiving 64 and 73 per cent of mainly

¹⁰⁵ The RTÜK consists of nine members, five of whom were nominated by the AK Parti, one by MHP, and two by CHP. Additionally, one member nominated by the HDP was in pre-trial detention since 2020.

¹⁰⁶ During the electoral period, RTÜK imposed 10 sanctions, 8 of which were against media critical of the government. In two cases, sanctions were imposed on *Flash Haber* and *Halk TV* for criticizing the government's earthquake response by guests during live talk shows, while *Fox TV* was sanctioned for criticizing the ruling coalition. However, the RTÜK did not substantially review complaints filed by the CHP on discriminatory treatment in accessing paid political advertisements. Also, it formally forwarded a complaint of Mr. Oğan on lack of coverage on the public TRT and 14 private television channels to the SEC. Shortly after the second round, RTÜK fined four opposition television stations for criticisms of the electoral process voiced by the hosts or other politicians during election night.

¹⁰⁷ From 8 April to 12 May, and again from 16 to 26 May, the ODIHR EOM monitored prime-time coverage (18:00-24:00) of six national broadcasters (*TRT-1*, *ATV*, *Fox TV*, *Kanal D*, *Show TV*, *Star*), the peak time (20:00-23:00) on *TRT Haber*, and the main news edition (20:00) on *Halk TV*. Additionally, it monitored online publications by *Habertürk* and *T24*, as well as the newspapers *Cumhuriyet*, *Hürriyet*, *Sabah*, and *Sözcü*.

¹⁰⁸ On May 12, a 77-minute interview featuring Mr. Erdoğan was simultaneously broadcast on 29 national television stations. During the second round, he participated in four prime-time interviews aired by 13 television stations, during which he criticized his opponent.

¹⁰⁹ The TRT is managed by a nine-member board of directors and a general director, all nominated by the president.

¹¹⁰ On 14 April, the CHP lodged a complaint with the public prosecutor, alleging biased coverage and unequal treatment by the TRT towards his party. The complaint remained unresolved before the announcement of the election results.

positive campaign-related news coverage. Mr. Kılıçdaroğlu received 36 and 27 per cent, which was largely negative coverage.¹¹¹

To facilitate citizens' access to impartial, and analytical information, the constitutionally guaranteed independence and impartiality of public broadcasters should be strengthened by independent and transparent appointments of its management, an independent editorial policy, and effective oversight. In line with international commitments, any favourable treatment of a contestant by public media should be treated as misuse of public funds and should be properly addressed.

The private *ATV* displayed bias in their newscasts towards the People's Alliance and Mr. Erdoğan, devoting a combined total of 37 percent of predominantly positive coverage to them. In contrast, the Nation's Alliance and the Labour and Freedom Alliance received 41 per cent and 10 per cent of coverage, respectively, which was almost exclusively negative. In the second round, *ATV* dedicated 54 per cent of exclusively positive coverage to Mr. Erdoğan, while Mr. Kılıçdaroğlu received 46 per cent of negative coverage. Contrary to legal provisions, *ATV* often added background music to their political news coverage, uplifting for Mr. Erdoğan and unsettling for Mr. Kılıçdaroğlu, and used grotesque imagery in coverage of Mr. Kılıçdaroğlu.¹¹² During both campaign periods, *ATV*, *TRT-1* and *TRT Haber* repeatedly emphasized the alleged alliance between the CHP and Mr. Kılıçdaroğlu with the HDP, accusing them of collaborating with terrorist organizations.

Fox TV and *Halk TV* also displayed bias in their coverage of both campaigns, with predominantly negative coverage of Mr. Erdoğan and the People's Alliance, while the Nation Alliance and Mr. Kılıçdaroğlu were portrayed positively. In both rounds of the elections, *Kanal D*, *Show* and *Star* covered Mr. Erdoğan and People's Alliance positively, but maintained a more balanced approach in covering the campaign activities of the Nation Alliance and Mr. Kılıçdaroğlu.

The newspapers *Hürriyet*, *Sabah* and the online *Habertürk* demonstrated clear favouritism towards Mr. Erdoğan and the People's Alliance. Conversely, *Cumhuriyet* and *Sözcü* largely supported Mr. Kılıçdaroğlu and the Nation Alliance, while sharply criticizing Mr. Erdoğan and the People's Alliance. Although the portal *T24* allotted comparable shares of coverage to both contestants, it maintained a more positive tone in its coverage of Mr. Kılıçdaroğlu and the Nation Alliance.

The underrepresentation of women in political leadership roles was reflected in the limited coverage of women during the parliamentary campaign. Even though women comprised approximately 25 per cent of the parliamentary candidates, monitored media dedicated between 86 and 97 per cent of coverage to men. Most of the limited exposure in broadcast and online media was dedicated to chairperson of *İyi Parti*, Ms. Akşener.

XII. ELECTION DISPUTE RESOLUTION

The legal framework does not fully guarantee effective redress for electoral disputes. Decisions of lower electoral councils can be appealed to higher election bodies, up to the SEC, by all stakeholders, except civil society organizations. Some deadlines for submission and resolution of complaints are unduly short or long, which is at odds with international good practice.¹¹³ The law does not require election

¹¹¹ Paragraph 16 of the [General Comment No. 34](#) to Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) requires States Parties to “ensure that public broadcasting services operate in an independent manner” and to “guarantee their independence and editorial freedom.”

¹¹² The Law on Audio-visual Media stipulates that media should abstain from using “exaggerated audio and images, and any effects and music other than natural sounds” in news reporting.

¹¹³ For example, complaints against DEC decisions must be lodged to the respective PECs within one day; the SEC has up to three months to consider objections against its decisions. Guideline 3.3 g. of the [Code of Good Practice](#) provides that “[t]ime-limits for lodging and deciding on complaints must be short (three to five days for each at first instance).”

disputes to be heard and considered in open sessions, limiting transparency and due process. The legal framework does not establish a system for filing campaign-related complaints.

The electoral dispute resolution framework should be reviewed to broaden the legal standing, establish a framework for campaign-related complaints, set appropriate deadlines for submission and resolution of complaints, and require public sessions for handling of the complaints.

SEC decisions, including those related to constitutionally protected rights and final election results, are not subject to judicial review. This leaves the electoral process and results under the final authority of an election management body, denying the opportunity for effective judicial remedy, contrary to paragraph 5.10 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document and international good practice.¹¹⁴ On 5 April, following an unsuccessful objection to the SEC against the registration of the incumbent president as a candidate, a citizen lodged an application to the ECtHR, in part claiming breach of the right to effective domestic remedy due to the lack of opportunity to seek judicial review of SEC decisions.

To provide for effective means of legal redress, including challenges to the final election results, the legal framework should be amended to provide for an opportunity to seek timely review of SEC decisions by an independent judicial body. The Constitutional Court should have jurisdiction over SEC decisions on alleged violations of constitutionally-protected rights.

In the pre-election period, in the absence of an opportunity to seek judicial review, various stakeholders formally requested the SEC to reconsider certain decisions, including some related to candidate registration, which were all rejected. Some DEC and PEC decisions were appealed to the SEC, including on the merging of polling stations. The SEC also received at least 10 objections against lower electoral council decisions on complaints alleging campaign violations, several of which it overturned.

The legal framework lacks comprehensive regulations on granting requests for recounts of polling station results and annulment of election results, undermining legal certainty and risking arbitrary or inconsistent decision-making. In addition, for both rounds of the elections, while legally permitted, the SEC unduly shortened legislated deadlines for the submission and resolution of election-day related disputes to one day at all levels (four days in total), without providing a justification, which is required by law.¹¹⁵ Such expedited deadlines for post-election complaints are contrary to international good practice and challenge stakeholders' access to seek effective legal remedy.¹¹⁶

The consideration of complaints related to the first round of the presidential election was finalized through all levels of the election administration by 18 May, in accordance with the shortened deadlines as set by the SEC. The SEC reverted to the extended legislative deadlines for the adjudication of parliamentary election complaints, utilizing almost two more weeks for their examination; it did not, however, revert to the extended legislative deadlines for the submission of complaints. Moreover, the SEC did not make the respective decision public, further reducing legal certainty and transparency of

¹¹⁴ Paragraph 5.10 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) states that “Everyone will have an effective means of redress against administrative decisions, so as to guarantee respect for fundamental rights and ensure legal integrity.” Section II.3.3.a of the [Code of Good Practice](#) states that “The appeal body should be either an electoral commission or a court. In any case, final appeal to a court must be possible.”

¹¹⁵ Under the Law on Basic Provisions, the SEC can alter legal deadlines if necessary, provided the reason is published in a decision. Although no fixed deadlines exist for finalizing DEC and PEC results protocols, the SEC set concrete dates as deadlines for complaints against the DEC and PEC tabulated results.

¹¹⁶ Paragraph 95 of the Explanatory Note to the [Code of Good Practice](#) recommends that time limits “be long enough to make an appeal possible, to guarantee the exercise of rights of defence and a reflected decision.” After the first election day, the Communist Party of Türkiye (TKP) lodged an unsuccessful complaint to the SEC requesting the extension of the shortened one-day deadline for submission of post-election complaints and appeals.

the election dispute resolution process. The post-second-round complaints were finalized by the SEC's compressed deadline of 1 June.

To ensure legal certainty and consistency, the legislation should regulate the granting of requests for recounts and annulment of results at all levels of the election administration. To ensure a right to effective legal redress, the SEC should refrain from shortening legislative deadlines for the submission and adjudication of post-election complaints.

During and after the first election day, political parties and candidates lodged thousands of complaints to DEC's.¹¹⁷ Many complaints by the opposition alleged discrepancies between the votes recorded in BBC results protocols and those entered into the electronic results database.¹¹⁸ Numerous complaints, including by the AK Parti, requested recounts, with only a few granted.¹¹⁹ An HDP complaint alleged widespread multiple voting by law enforcement officers.¹²⁰ Although many cases were rejected, numerous complaints regarding incorrect data entry were properly resolved, provided they were sufficiently substantiated.¹²¹ According to political parties, there were instances of inconsistent rulings amongst mid-level electoral councils in response to complaints supported by comparable evidence.¹²² Following the run-off election day, at several DEC's, AK Parti and CHP challenged invalidated ballots and requested recounts, which were generally rejected due to lack of evidence.¹²³

Overall, the process for resolving electoral disputes lacked transparency at all levels of the election administration. Complaints to the SEC were reviewed in closed sessions and parties to the dispute were denied the right to be heard, inconsistent with international standards.¹²⁴ Contrary to legal requirements, the SEC did not make all decisions on objections and complaints public.¹²⁵ The few published decisions did not disclose the names of complainants and were generally not sufficiently or soundly reasoned. PECs and DEC's did not publish their decisions on complaints. Political parties informed the ODIHR EOM of instances of DEC's not responding to formal pre-election complaints and instances of BBC's refusing to register complaints on election day. Many IEOM interlocutors expressed a lack of trust in the election administration, law enforcement bodies, and courts to resolve electoral grievances impartially and effectively, which for some had a dissuasive effect on lodging complaints.

¹¹⁷ The EOM was made aware of complaints lodged by AK Parti, CHP, HDP, *İyi Parti*, MHP, TİP, TKP, YSP, and independent candidates. YSP reported that it formally objected to the invalidation of some 16,000 presidential election ballots and some 20,000 parliamentary election ballots in Aydın province. In Istanbul, the HDP filed more than 5,000 complaints, many alleging discrepancies between BBC protocols and entries in the results database.

¹¹⁸ For example, the CHP lodged complaints nationwide about discrepancies in BBC protocols and entries in the results database for 2,269 polling stations in the presidential and 4,825 polling stations in the parliamentary elections.

¹¹⁹ For example, a DEC in Van province granted a CHP request to recount two ballot boxes, and media reported that some DEC's in Diyarbakır, Şanlıurfa, and Batman granted recounts to YSP.

¹²⁰ The complaint stated that numerous law enforcement officers utilized their duty letters to vote at multiple locations in Istanbul, failing to hand in the letters after voting at the BBC's where they were assigned.

¹²¹ The SEC informed the EOM that for the presidential elections, it received six appeals; five were rejected and one overturned a DEC decision granting a recount. As of 26 May, the SEC had adjudicated 48 appeals concerning the parliamentary elections; 39 were rejected, two satisfied, three forwarded to lower-level electoral councils and four were pending. The *İyi Parti* filed complaints to the SEC requesting recounts of Isparta province, one-third of polling stations in Uşak province and three districts in Erzurum province.

¹²² For instance, *İyi Parti* informed the ODIHR EOM that some DEC's, in considering complaints, applied different criteria to determine the validity of ballots. Due to the lack of consistent publication of such decisions, the ODIHR EOM was not able to conduct a comparative analysis of the rulings of mid-level electoral councils.

¹²³ For example, AK Parti requested a recount of all 461 polling station results from the Beyoğlu DEC in Istanbul without providing evidence of any irregularities, while the CHP requested recounts for eight ballot boxes in the same district.

¹²⁴ See Paragraph 12 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) that obliges court proceedings to be held in open session. Paragraph 100 of the Explanatory Note of the [Code of Good Practice](#) provides that the resolution of electoral complaints should be of a judicial nature during which the rights of both parties to be heard are to be safeguarded.

¹²⁵ The SEC only published four decisions on objections throughout the whole electoral period. Despite repeated requests, the ODIHR EOM did not receive comprehensive information or documents related to the objections and complaints submitted to the SEC, PEC's, and DEC's.

To increase the efficacy of the dispute resolution process, the SEC and lower-level electoral councils should increase efforts to substantively consider all complaints and objections and to provide well-reasoned and legally sound decisions. Furthermore, measures could be taken by the SEC and mid-level electoral councils to enhance transparency and public trust in the election dispute resolution process, including publishing all decisions on complaints as required by law.

XIII. ELECTION OBSERVATION

The law does not provide for citizen and international observation, at odds with OSCE commitments.¹²⁶ However, the Law on Basic Provisions allows for monitoring by observers nominated by political parties and independent candidates in the constituency where they contest the elections. Further, according to the law, the public is permitted to observe the vote count. The SEC accredited certain international organizations to observe the elections, including ODIHR and other organizations making up the IEOM. However, it rejected a number of individual observers from ODIHR, OSCE PA and proposed national staff of international observers, without providing clear justification. CSOs that attempted to get accredited were rejected by the SEC.¹²⁷

The law should be amended to allow for international and citizen observation, in line with paragraph 8 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document. Observers should be granted access to all phases of the electoral process, including voting, counting and tabulation. Adequate regulations for the accreditation of observers should be introduced.

In both rounds, numerous CSOs, including *Vote and Beyond*, *Turkish Volunteers*, *Human Rights Association* and the *Association for Monitoring Equal Rights* observed election day and conducted parallel vote tabulation. They were accredited as political party observers or operated without accreditation, as engaged citizens.

XIV. FIRST-ROUND ELECTION DAY

Election day was well-administered and largely peaceful, with several incidents in and around polling stations.¹²⁸ In-country voter turnout was reported at 88.92 per cent.¹²⁹ Despite a silence period one day prior to the elections and on election day, most presidential candidates and political parties campaigned on social networks, with the exception of Mr. Erdoğan, AK Parti, the Democrat Party (DP), DEVA and *Memleket*. The IEOM observed campaign activities around polling stations in 14 cases during voting hours.

¹²⁶ Paragraph 8 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) states that: “the participating States consider that the presence of observers, both foreign and domestic, can enhance the electoral process for States in which elections are taking place. They therefore invite observers from any other CSCE participating States and any appropriate private institutions and organizations who may wish to do so to observe the course of their national election proceedings, to the extent permitted by law.”

¹²⁷ The *Human Rights Association* and the *Association for Monitoring Equal Rights* informed the ODIHR EOM that the SEC officially rejected their request to register as observers.

¹²⁸ Tensions or unrest was observed by IEOM observers in the vicinity of 4 per cent of the polling stations. According to media reports, instances of violence on election day include physical attacks by AK Parti observers on a TİP member in Istanbul; on a ballot box committee member, who had opposed group voting in Şanlıurfa; on YSP observers in Şırnak, Adana, and Mardin; on an independent election observer reported by the Human Rights Association, and verbal attack TKP observers by MHP members in Konya.

¹²⁹ The SEC did not announce any turnout data on election night. According to the SEC decision on the final first-round presidential election results, the overall turnout was 87.04 per cent and in out-of-country polling stations, including at customs gates, was 57.73 per cent.

A. OPENING AND VOTING

The IEOM positively assessed the opening procedures in 118 out of 132 observations. Although procedures were largely followed, a few oversights were observed, including inconsistent recording of the number of ballots in 8 instances and envelopes in 5 instances. In 35 instances, not all ballots were stamped before opening, and in 11 instances, the envelopes were not uniformly stamped, contrary to legal requirements.

Observers positively assessed voting procedures in 96 per cent of the 1,022 polling stations visited. Voting procedures were more negatively assessed in provinces in the Southeast (10 per cent of negative assessments) and in earthquake-affected provinces (13 per cent of negative assessments). Voting procedures were largely followed; however, some important safeguards were not consistently implemented, primarily due to BBC members' lack of understanding of the procedures. In 4 per cent of the observations, ballot boxes were not properly sealed, and in 2 per cent, the identity of voters was not consistently checked. In 40 per cent of the observations, BBC members did not adequately instruct voters to fold their ballots and insert them in the envelope.

The layout of polling stations did not fully safeguard the secrecy of the vote in 2 per cent of the observations. Group or family voting was reported at 6 per cent of the polling stations. Only half of the polling stations were deemed accessible for voters with disabilities, and the interior layout of 77 per cent of the polling stations was suitable for such voters. In line with the 2022 legal amendments, BBCs provided voting templates to visually impaired voters for marking their ballots. However, the design of these templates did not enable voters to identify the preferred contestants without additional assistance and did not fully provide for secrecy of the vote.¹³⁰

To encourage equal participation of persons with disabilities in elections, relevant authorities should allocate adequate premises for polling stations to provide easy independent access for voters with physical disabilities. Consideration could be given to revising the used assistive tools, facilitating unassisted voting for persons with visual impairments.

IEOM observers found the voting process to be largely transparent despite some instances where observation was hindered. Political party and candidate observers were present in 60 per cent, and citizen observers in 14 per cent of the polling stations observed.¹³¹ However, not sufficient queue control, inadequate polling station layouts, and high turnout resulted in overcrowding in 14 per cent of the observed cases, mainly in the morning hours. Access to 36 polling stations was denied to IEOM observers by police officers, BBC chairpersons or other unauthorized persons, indicating a need for further awareness of the role of observers. The presence of unauthorized persons was also noted in 12 per cent of the polling stations. In 5 per cent of the observations, individuals not belonging to the BBC, mainly party observers, interfered with the voting process.¹³² According to media reports, several thousands of voters in Gaziantep were covertly registered as BBC members, preventing them from voting at the polling stations where they were registered.¹³³

¹³⁰ Secrecy of vote might be compromised if the voter accidentally extended the imprint of the voting stamp outside the designated slot while using the template. Article 29 (a) of the [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) to which Türkiye is party obliges States to “ensure that persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in political and public life on equal basis with others [...] inter alia, by ensuring that voting procedures, facilities and materials are appropriate, accessible and easy to understand and use.”

¹³¹ Including representatives from the AK Parti in 61 per cent, CHP in 56 per cent, *İyi Parti* in 25 per cent, and MHP in 20 per cent of the observations.

¹³² The majority of BBC chairpersons were seen not wearing the prescribed badges, and the badges worn by party-nominated BBC members were similar to those issued to observers by their respective nominating parties, making it difficult to distinguish between BBC personnel and party observers.

¹³³ According to the SEC, for the second round, these voters were reinstated to vote at their original PSs.

B. COUNTING AND TABULATION

IEOM observers assessed the vote count positively in 104 out of 120 polling stations visited. However, in almost half of the observations, the closing procedures were not completed correctly before the vote count started. The BBCs inconsistently counted the number of signatures and fingerprints on the voter lists in 12 instances, or failed to record these numbers in the protocol at this stage in 38 instances. Unused envelopes and ballots were not counted in 23 instances. The BBCs did not post copies of the protocols for public display in 23 polling stations; in all but three cases, they provided copies of the protocols upon request.

Contrary to the law, envelopes were not counted twice in 55 instances, nor recorded in the protocol in 23 instances. In 27 cases, not all ballots cast for each party were properly counted and separated, and not all data was correctly entered in the protocol in 10 instances. In all observations but one, the validity of the ballots was determined in a consistent manner. More serious irregularities observed included: in 18 cases, persons other than BBC members participated in the count, and official protocols were pre-signed by the BBC members in 15 instances, raising concerns about the integrity of the count. IEOM observers reported difficulties in reconciling the results figures and filling in the protocols from 21 counts. IEOM observers generally attributed these procedural shortcomings to the BBCs' attempt to speedily finalise the counting process.

The results tabulation process, observed in 97 DEC, was evaluated as efficient. However, due to inadequate premises and the simultaneous conduct of multiple procedures, IEOM observers negatively assessed transparency in 8 cases. Discrepancies in some of the results protocols submitted by the BBCs were observed in 9 DEC, and in 24 cases, BBCs corrected their protocols without a formal DEC decision, highlighting the lack of uniform guidance on this stage of the process.¹³⁴ Of concern, in 8 instances, IEOM observers were restricted in their observations and in 9 cases, other observers were prevented from following the tabulation of results.

Consideration could be given to reviewing election day procedures to ensure their effective and consistent application. Clear procedures for rectifying errors and discrepancies in result protocols should be established to ensure consistency and transparency in the process of results tabulation.

The SEC did not announce turnout data or any other information on election day. In the immediate aftermath of the vote count, with no official results available from the SEC, media outlets began reporting election results. The SEC only made its first result announcement at 3:00 am after election day, based on 92 per cent of results protocols processed. Several contestants raised concerns about the timeliness of the disclosure and a lack of transparency in the announcement of preliminary election results.¹³⁵

XV. POST-FIRST-ROUND DEVELOPMENTS

On 15 May, with 99.92 per cent of votes tabulated, the SEC announced that no presidential candidate

¹³⁴ Election laws and SEC regulations lack explicit procedures for reconciling results protocols by BBCs at polling stations when counts do not match, or for correcting protocols at DEC.

¹³⁵ Several opposition politicians, including the CHP Mayors of [Ankara and Istanbul](#), along with the YSP spokesperson, made allegations that Anadolu Agency had exaggerated the gains of AK Parti and its presidential candidate in the initial hours. Accusations were also [directed](#) against ANKA News Agency for allegedly suppressing data flow. Both media outlets have [refuted](#) these accusations, [attributing](#) the apparent discrepancies to differences in their methodologies.

obtained the absolute majority of valid votes in the first round, and a second round was to be held between Mr. Erdoğan and Mr. Kılıçdaroğlu on 28 May. While not contrary to the law, the SEC did not publish turnout data and disaggregated polling station results prior to announcing the final results. Although eligible political parties had access to the tabulated results and scanned protocols via the SEC information system, the lack of such an opportunity for voters to verify the results negatively impacted public confidence in the results tabulation.¹³⁶

The SEC should promptly publish the preliminary turnout data following the closing of the polls. To further enhance transparency and foster trust in the results tabulation process, the SEC should publish preliminary election results disaggregated per polling station in an accessible format, and consider making the scanned protocols available online.

Prior to the first round, the SEC adopted a regulation that set 19 May as the deadline for declaring the final electoral results. However, the SEC only announced the final parliamentary results after the run-off, citing to the ODIHR EOM a need to finalize the complaints process (see *Election Dispute Resolution*). The SEC did not publicly disclose its decision to delay the announcement, nor did it consistently communicate it to all stakeholders, including lower-level electoral councils, undermining the transparency of the results announcement and voter's ability to be informed about the process.¹³⁷ The SEC announced the final results of the first round of the presidential election on 19 May, following the adjudication of complaints.

The lead-up to the run-off election day saw a continuation of the starkly polarized political environment, mirroring the first round. Representatives from CHP, YSP and *İyi Parti* raised various allegations of election day-related irregularities, including regarding the accuracy of the data entry, and lodged numerous complaints with various election bodies (see *Election Dispute Resolution*).¹³⁸ However, no contestant publicly questioned the results as announced by the SEC. In this period, a high-ranking government official made verbal attacks against a prominent CSO.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ The ODIHR EOM compared a random sample of approximately 100 results protocols from the general elections, which were collected by IEOM observers on the first election day, against the officially tabulated results. Although some corrections made in accordance with the law were observed, all result figures showed a clear match.

¹³⁷ The election calendar published by the SEC on 13 March was not updated to reflect the postponement of the results announcement. Several DECs informed the ODIHR EOM that they did not receive any information from the SEC regarding the announcement of election results after the first-round election day. Some PECs, including in Ardahan, Burdur, Erzurum, Hakkari, Kars, Mardin, Sivas and Van announced the final provincial parliamentary results by 24 May, before the announcement of the final nationwide results by the SEC.

¹³⁸ Numerous social network posts and public statements, including those from the [Worker's Party of Türkiye](#) (TİP) and YSP, raised allegations of systemic errors in the results protocols and entry of protocols, instances of multiple votes cast by law enforcement members, disenfranchisement of voters by involuntarily nominating them as BBC members, and voter intimidation. Mr. Kılıçdaroğlu and Future Party (*Gelecek*) leader Ahmet Davutoğlu called on the SEC to ensure accurate data entry into its electronic system. On 16 May, a [statement](#) from the Communications Directorate Centre for Combating Disinformation referred to the allegations as a manipulation intended to provoke public opinion. In a statement of 17 May, the SEC dismissed these allegations as groundless.

¹³⁹ In a 21 May statement, Minister of Interior Süleyman Soylu verbally attacked the citizen observer group Vote and Beyond, alleging that its representatives have terrorized voters, adding they have “no place in the polling stations”. The same day, speaking to the General Directorate of Security, Mr. Soylu also called for the imprisonment of lawyers who represent PKK: “When the PKK’s lawyers are jailed, there will be nothing left to see in Turkey from the PKK. They are the target.”

XVI. SECOND-ROUND ELECTION DAY

The second-round election day was generally calm and well-administered, with in-country voter turnout reported at 85.72 per cent.¹⁴⁰ Isolated incidents involving physical violence were reported throughout the day, mainly directed at opposition or CSO representatives.¹⁴¹ Violations of campaign silence were also noted, including online.¹⁴²

A. OPENING AND VOTING

The opening process was positively assessed in all but one of the 83 polling stations observed. Some procedural oversights were noted, such as inconsistent recording of the number of ballots received in four cases, not stamping all ballots before opening in five cases, and failing to stamp envelopes in seven cases.

The IEOM positively assessed the voting in 97 per cent of the 651 polling stations observed. However, voters were not consistently instructed on voting procedures in 40 per cent of observations. Group or family voting was noted in 4 per cent of the observations, and in 2 per cent, the polling station layout potentially compromised the secrecy of the vote. In eight instances, individuals, inside or outside of polling stations, were keeping track of voters arriving at polling stations, potentially compromising voters' ability to vote free from pressure or fear of retribution.

Seventy-six per cent of the polling stations observed had political party and candidate observers, while 18 per cent had CSO representatives present. As a matter of concern, several cases of obstruction and physical assault of observers and CSO representatives were made known to the IEOM.¹⁴³ On eight occasions, IEOM observers were denied access to polling stations or asked to leave by party representatives and unauthorized persons. Unauthorized individuals, primarily local officials or non-accredited party representatives, were observed in some 8 per cent of polling stations. Furthermore, in 3 per cent of the cases, persons not belonging to the BBC, mainly party observers, were found to be interfering with the voting process. Voting templates for visually impaired voters were generally available but not consistently updated for fitting the run-off ballots.

B. COUNTING AND TABULATION

The closing and counting procedures were positively assessed in 79 out of 84 observations, with some procedural shortcomings frequently observed. In what appeared to be an attempt to speed up the process, 47 BBCs did not complete all the procedures before opening the ballot box, and the prescribed order of the subsequent procedures was not followed in 22 instances. In some cases important safeguards were

¹⁴⁰ The overall turnout was announced at 84.15 per cent. In out-of-country and customs gate polling stations, the turnout reached 56.34 per cent.

¹⁴¹ According to social media reports, AK Parti members or those affiliated with the party were reported to be involved in attacks on BBC members in Erzurum, a CHP mayor along with voters in front of a polling station in Istanbul, and people waiting in the courtyard of a polling centre in Istanbul. YSP and HDP representatives were reported to have been attacked in Şanlıurfa while trying to enter a polling station where violations had allegedly taken place. Further, a fight broke out between BBC members and voters in Diyarbakır. According to media reports, one *İyi Parti* member was killed during victory celebrations in Ordu province.

¹⁴² On social networks, several political parties posted campaign messages, including MHP, CHP, YSP, TİP, and Victory Party, among others, with the notable exception of the incumbent President and AK Parti. On election day, Mr. Kılıçdaroğlu, a CHP Vice President and an AK Parti Deputy Chairman called on voters to support their candidates. The ODIHR EOM observed campaigning by the AK Parti in Mardin.

¹⁴³ According to reports from the media and allegations from social networks, in the Akçakale district in Şanlıurfa, lawyers were physically attacked when trying to enter a polling station where allegedly ballot-box stuffing had occurred; party observers were physically attacked for objecting to irregularities in several instances, including CHP party observers in the Eyyübiye district in Şanlıurfa and party observers and civil society representatives in Mardin, in Antakya, and in Malatya.

skipped, in 10 instances, signatures and fingerprints on voter lists were not counted, and in 17 cases, unused envelopes and ballots were not counted. Further, the validity of envelopes was not consistently verified, and their number was not compared with the number of voters who voted in 13 instances. Ballots were not properly separated and counted in 24 instances, but ballot validity was consistently determined in all but 3 observations. Potentially compromising the integrity of results, official protocols were pre-signed by the BBC members in 16 observations. Results protocols were not publicly displayed in 12 polling stations.

The tabulation process, followed by IEOM observers in 60 DEC's, was positively evaluated, except in two observations, due to an inadequate layout of the DEC premises. Discrepancies during the data entry were observed in two cases. Complaints filed were reported from 33 polling stations. IEOM observers were not given access to observe the data entry for out-of-country voting, limiting transparency of that process. The SEC released the first aggregated preliminary results at 19:30, followed by a second announcement at 22:30 declaring Mr. Erdoğan's re-election as president, based on 99.4 per cent of the tabulated results.

XVII. POST-SECOND ROUND DEVELOPMENTS

The post-election environment remained calm, with no contestant publicly questioning the election results. Representatives of AK Parti and CHP challenged a number of invalidated ballots and requested recounts at multiple DEC's (*see Election Dispute Resolution*). The SEC published the final parliamentary results and seat distribution on 30 May. The final results of the presidential run-off were announced on 1 June, after the adjudication of complaints, in line with the deadline set in the election calendar. Following the announcement of final results, the SEC made available online data disaggregated per polling stations, along with scanned results protocols and tally sheets.

The new parliament includes an increase in the number of women represented, rising from 100 (17 percent of the members) to 119 (20 percent). Despite the positive trend, the persistently low representation of women reconfirmed the necessity for concerted efforts from authorities to tackle barriers preventing broader female participation in politics.

XVIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations as contained throughout the text are offered with a view to further enhance the conduct of elections in Türkiye and to support efforts to bring them fully in line with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections. These recommendations should be read in conjunction with past ODIHR recommendations that have not yet been addressed. ODIHR stands ready to assist the authorities of Türkiye to further improve the electoral process and to address the recommendations contained in this and previous reports.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ In paragraph 25 of the 1999 [OSCE Istanbul Document](#), OSCE participating States committed themselves “to follow up promptly the ODIHR’s election assessment and recommendations”. Recommendation 11 from the [2015 parliamentary elections](#) (2015 parliamentary final report), recommendation 9 from the [2015 early parliamentary elections](#) (2015 early parliamentary final report) and recommendation 2 from the [2018 early presidential and parliamentary elections](#) (2018 final report) are fully implemented. Recommendations 1, 3, 5, 10, 17, 20 and 23 from the [2014 presidential elections](#) (2014 final report), recommendations 2, 5, 10, 17, 20, 22, 23, 31 from the 2015 parliamentary final report, 10, 12, 15, 22 from the 2015 early parliamentary final report, and recommendations 1, 4, 7, 11, 15, 18, 29, 31 and 32 from the 2018 final report are partially implemented.

A. PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To provide a basis for the conduct of fully democratic elections, constitutional reform should ensure broad guarantees for fundamental rights and freedoms and independence of the judiciary. The legislative framework should be amended to be consistent with fundamental freedoms of association, assembly, expression, and electoral rights.
2. The legislation should be amended in line with previous ODIHR recommendations to address substantive shortcomings and gaps, including regulation of a presidential election second round. The amendment process should provide a coherent legal framework, involve inclusive public consultation and seek political consensus.
3. In order to enhance transparency and increase public trust, election administration bodies should hold sessions open to the public and publish information of public interest in a timely and consistent manner, including all agendas, decisions and detailed data on complaints and objections.
4. As previously recommended, the voting rights of students in military schools and conscripts should be reinstated and restrictions on prisoners' voting rights should be proportionate to the crime committed. The election legislation should be harmonized with the objectives of CRPD to ensure full voting rights for persons with intellectual disabilities.
5. Consideration could be given to introducing temporary special legislative measures to promote women candidates, including gender quotas and requirements for placing women in winnable positions. Additionally, political parties should consider taking voluntary measures to promote greater participation of women in their parties, including to assess the barriers to women's participation, and address all forms of gender-based discrimination.
6. Authorities should take necessary measures to ensure that campaigning is conducted in an atmosphere free from intimidation and fear of retribution and in an environment where fundamental freedoms are fully respected.
7. To ensure conditions for an equitable campaign environment, consideration could be given to provide that all campaign prohibitions, including the misuse of administrative resources, apply from the calling of the elections. The law should ensure equal application of campaign rules to all contestants, and regulate that the incumbent president should not enjoy undue advantages. Authorities should put in place measures to ensure a clear separation between the State and party to prevent candidates from using the advantage of their office for electoral purposes, including an effective sanctioning mechanism against the misuse of administrative resources, and undertake effective campaign oversight by conducting thorough investigations of all campaign-related offences.
8. To align the campaign finance framework with international good practice and GRECO recommendations, authorities should address noted gaps and ambiguities. In particular, the authorities could consider establishing periodic, timely and transparent reporting of campaign contributions and expenditures, timely publishing of such reports including before election day, and providing a clear oversight and monitoring mandate to a qualified independent institution. Furthermore, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions for breaches of campaign finance regulations could be introduced.
9. The legal framework should be revised to align it with international standards on freedom of expression, including the decriminalization of defamation and libel, the abolition of special protection for the honour of public officials, including the president, the elimination of criminal

prosecution for spreading false information, and the liberalization of anti-terrorism laws and their application.

10. Any restrictions on access to online content should be based on precise and exhaustive legal grounds and conform to the principles of necessity and proportionality, as outlined in international standards. The power to restrict access should rest exclusively with the judiciary. A register of any blocked websites or social network posts or accounts should be publicly available.
11. To provide for effective means of legal redress, including challenges to the final election results, the legal framework should be amended to provide for an opportunity to seek timely review of SEC decisions by an independent judicial body. The Constitutional Court should have jurisdiction over SEC decisions on alleged violations of constitutionally-protected rights.

B. OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Electoral System

12. To ensure equality of the vote, the system of seat distribution should be reviewed to address the disproportion of the ratio of voters to parliamentary mandates.

Election Administration

13. Additional efforts are needed to introduce measures to provide for greater representation of women as chairpersons and members of election administration.
14. To ensure a comprehensive and cohesive legal framework for the elections, the SEC should adopt regulations that sufficiently supplement all aspects of the election legislation.
15. To ensure consistency in the implementation of the election process, the SEC should arrange timely, comprehensive, standardized and compulsory training for all members of PECs, DEC's and BBCs, including members appointed by political parties.

Voter Registration

16. Consideration could be given to extending the period for scrutiny of voter lists, bringing the deadline for changes closer to election day, and to simplify procedures to facilitate voter participation.

Candidate Registration

17. The discriminatory candidate eligibility requirements should be reviewed in line with international standards and commitments. The conditions for revocation and restitution of candidacy rights of convicts should be proportional to the crime committed.
18. In line with international standards and good practice, the legislative requirements for formation of political parties and on eligibility of political parties to contest the elections should be reviewed to enhance respect for freedom of association and promote pluralism.

Media

19. The legal requirements for impartiality and unbiased coverage of contestants should be overseen by an independent media regulatory body, which should proactively ensure effective remedies for violations and act upon all complaints received in a timely manner. Systematic media monitoring throughout the entire campaign period can help the body ensure impartiality requirements are being met. The body should have the authority to issue formal decisions and all decisions should be promptly published.
20. To facilitate citizens' access to impartial, and analytical information, the constitutionally guaranteed independence and impartiality of public broadcasters should be strengthened by independent and transparent appointments of its management, an independent editorial policy, and effective oversight. In line with international commitments, any favourable treatment of a contestant by public media should be treated as misuse of public funds and should be properly addressed.

Election Dispute Resolution

21. The electoral dispute resolution framework should be reviewed to broaden the legal standing, establish a framework for campaign-related complaints, set appropriate deadlines for submission and resolution of complaints, and require public sessions for handling of the complaints.
22. To ensure legal certainty and consistency, the legislation should regulate the granting of requests for recounts and annulment of results at all levels of the election administration. To ensure a right to effective legal redress, the SEC should refrain from shortening legislative deadlines for the submission and adjudication of post-election complaints.
23. To increase the efficacy of the dispute resolution process, the SEC and lower-level electoral councils should increase efforts to substantively consider all complaints and objections and to provide well-reasoned and legally sound decisions. Furthermore, measures could be taken by the SEC and mid-level electoral councils to enhance transparency and public trust in the election dispute resolution process, including publishing all decisions on complaints as required by law.

Election Observation

24. The law should be amended to allow for international and citizen observation, in line with paragraph 8 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document. Observers should be granted access to all phases of the electoral process, including voting, counting and tabulation. Adequate regulations for the accreditation of observers should be introduced.

Election Day

25. To encourage equal participation of persons with disabilities in elections, relevant authorities should allocate adequate premises for polling stations to provide easy independent access for voters with physical disabilities. Consideration could be given to revising the used assistive tools, facilitating unassisted voting for persons with visual impairments.
26. Consideration could be given to reviewing election day procedures to ensure their effective and consistent application. Clear procedures for rectifying errors and discrepancies in result protocols should be established to ensure consistency and transparency in the process of results tabulation.

Post-First Round Developments

27. The SEC should promptly publish the preliminary turnout data following the closing of the polls. To further enhance transparency and foster trust in the results tabulation process, the SEC should publish preliminary election results disaggregated per polling station in an accessible format, and consider making the scanned protocols available online.

ANNEXE I: FINAL ELECTION RESULTS

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION – FIRST ROUND

Total number of registered voters	64,145,504
<i>Number of voters registered in the country</i>	60,721,745
<i>Number of voters registered abroad</i>	3,423,759
Total number of votes cast (<i>turnout</i>)	55,833,153 (87.04 per cent)
<i>Number of votes cast in the country (in-country turnout)</i>	53,993,683 (88.92 per cent)
<i>Number of votes cast abroad (out-of-country turnout)</i>	1,839,470 (53.73 per cent)
Number of valid votes	54,796,049
Number of invalid votes	1,037,104

Candidate (in order of appearance on the ballot)	Votes	Percentage
Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (AK Parti and MHP)	27,133,849	49.52
Muharrem İnce (Independent candidate)	235,783	0.43
Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu (CHP and İyi Parti)	24,595,178	44.88
Sinan Oğan (Independent candidate)	2,831,239	5.17

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION – SECOND ROUND

Total number of registered voters	64,197,454
<i>Number of voters registered in the country</i>	60,771,236
<i>Number of voters registered abroad</i>	3,426,218
Total number of votes cast (<i>turnout</i>)	54,023,601 (84.15 per cent)
<i>Number of votes cast in the country (in-country turnout)</i>	52,093,375 (85.72 per cent)
<i>Number of votes cast abroad (out-of-country turnout)</i>	1,930,226 (56.34 per cent)
Number of valid votes	53,339,313
Number of invalid votes	684,288

Candidate (in order of appearance on the ballot)	Votes	Percentage
Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (AK Parti and MHP)	27,834,589	52.18
Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu (CHP and İyi Parti)	25,504,724	47.82

Source: SEC decision no. [2023/1269](#) on consolidation of provincial results protocols and results for the presidential election

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

Total number of votes cast (<i>turnout</i>)	55,835,895 (87.05 per cent)
<i>Number of votes cast in the country (in-country turnout)</i>	53,994,049 (88.92 per cent)
<i>Number of votes cast abroad (out-of-country turnout)</i>	1,841,846 (53.80 per cent)
Number of valid votes	54,442,588
Number of invalid votes	1,393,307

Political party (in order of appearance on the ballot)	Votes	Percentage	Mandates
National Party (<i>Millet</i>)	52,315	0.10	--
Rights and Freedoms Party (HAK-PAR)	42,509	0.08	--
Communist Party of Türkiye (TKP)	63,809	0.12	--
Communist Movement of Türkiye (TKH)	17,476	0.03	--
Left Party (<i>Sol Parti</i>)	77,992	0.14	--
Young Party (<i>Genç Parti</i>)	112,972	0,21	--
Homeland Party (<i>Memleket</i>)	502,669	0.92	--
Great Unity Party (BBP)	530,770	0.97	--
Justice and Development Party (AK Parti)	19,392,462	35.62	268
New Welfare Party (<i>Yeniden Refah</i>)	1,527,048	2.80	5
Nationalist Movement Party (MHP)	5,484,820	10.07	50
Green Left Party (<i>Yeşil Sol Parti</i>)	4,803,922	8.82	61
Workers' Party of Türkiye (TİP)	956,057	1.76	4
Justice Unity Party (AB)	41,196	0.08	--
Motherland Party (ANAP)	66,102	0.12	--
Innovation Party (YP)	11,171	0.02	--
People's Liberation Party (HKP)	31,831	0.06	--
National Path Party (<i>Milli Yol</i>)	17,758	0.03	--
Patriotic Party (<i>Vatan Partisi</i>)	52,720	0.10	--
Power Union Party (GBP)	26,359	0.05	--
Republican People's Party (CHP)	13,802,183	25.35	169
Good Party (<i>İyi Parti</i>)	5,275,981	9.69	43
Justice Party (AP)	109,236	0.20	--
Victory Party (<i>Zafer Partisi</i>)	1,216,399	2.23	--
Independent Candidates (<i>Total</i>)	226,831	0.42	--

Source: SEC decision no. [2023/1255](#) on consolidation of provincial results protocols and results for the parliamentary elections

ANNEXE II: LIST OF OBSERVERS IN THE INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Michael	LINK	Special Coordinator (First round)	Germany
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ABOUT THE ODIHR

The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is OSCE's principal institution to assist participating States "to ensure full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, to abide by the rule of law, to promote principles of democracy and (...) to build, strengthen and protect democratic institutions, as well as promote tolerance throughout society" (1992 Helsinki Summit Document). This is referred to as the OSCE human dimension.

ODIHR, based in Warsaw (Poland) was created as the Office for Free Elections at the 1990 Paris Summit and started operating in May 1991. One year later, the name of the Office was changed to reflect an expanded mandate to include human rights and democratization. Today it employs over 150 staff.

ODIHR is the lead agency in Europe in the field of **election observation**. Every year, it co-ordinates and organizes the deployment of thousands of observers to assess whether elections in the OSCE region are conducted in line with OSCE commitments, other international obligations and standards for democratic elections and with national legislation. Its unique methodology provides an in-depth insight into the electoral process in its entirety. Through assistance projects, ODIHR helps participating States to improve their electoral framework.

The Office's **democratization** activities include: rule of law, legislative support, democratic governance, migration and freedom of movement, and gender equality. ODIHR implements a number of targeted assistance programmes annually, seeking to develop democratic structures.

ODIHR also assists participating States' in fulfilling their obligations to promote and protect **human rights and fundamental freedoms** consistent with OSCE human dimension commitments. This is achieved by working with a variety of partners to foster collaboration, build capacity and provide expertise in thematic areas, including human rights in the fight against terrorism, enhancing the human rights protection of trafficked people, human rights education and training, human rights monitoring and reporting, and women's human rights and security.

Within the field of **tolerance and non-discrimination**, ODIHR provides support to the participating States in strengthening their response to hate crimes and incidents of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance. ODIHR's activities related to tolerance and non-discrimination are focused on the following areas: legislation; law enforcement training; monitoring, reporting on, and following up on responses to hate-motivated crimes and incidents; as well as educational activities to promote tolerance, respect, and mutual understanding.

ODIHR provides advice to participating States on their policies on **Roma and Sinti**. It promotes capacity-building and networking among Roma and Sinti communities, and encourages the participation of Roma and Sinti representatives in policy-making bodies.

All ODIHR activities are carried out in close co-ordination and co-operation with OSCE participating States, OSCE institutions and field operations, as well as with other international organizations.

More information is available on the ODIHR website (www.osce.org/odihr).