

# Kurdish Monitoring

Kurdish Language Rights Monitoring and Reporting Platform

## Report on Systematic Violations Against Kurdish Language and Culture in Turkey

January - February - March 2025

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KURDISH MONITORING

2025

## About Kurdish Monitoring

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

### Functioning and Objectives of the Platform

#### 1. Data Collection

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

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

#### 2. Reporting

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

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

#### 3. Advocacy

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

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

## **Target Audience and Collaborations**

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

**Media:** Local and national media, independent journalists.

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

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

## **Final Goal**

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

# Current Situation of Kurdish Language Rights in Turkey

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

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

Kurdish language teacher appointments remain merely symbolic.

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

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

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

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

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

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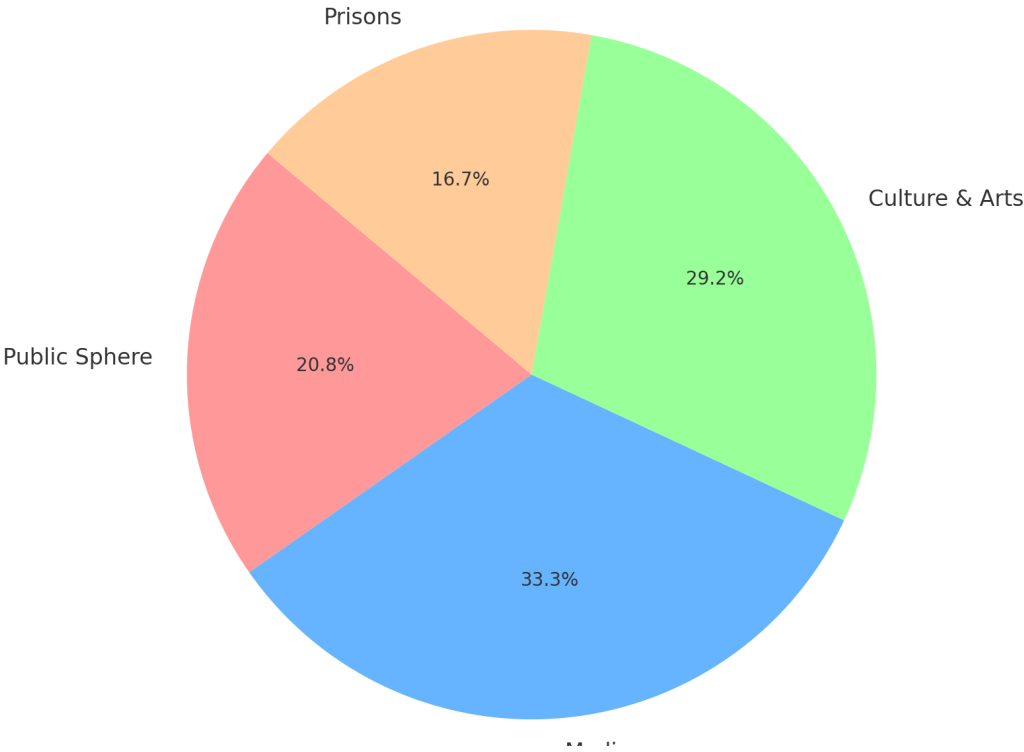


# The Use of Kurdish in the Public Space Is Being Suppressed

This report, prepared by Kurdish Monitoring – the Platform for Monitoring and Reporting on Kurdish Language Rights, reveals 24 separate incidents of restrictions on the use of Kurdish in public spaces, media, cultural and artistic fields, and prisons during the first quarter of 2025. Kurdish Monitoring observes and reports on violations of Kurdish language rights and informs the public. These incidents once again highlight the pressures Kurdish faces in social life.

## Distribution of Restrictions by Category:

- Public Space: 5 cases
- Media: 8 cases
- Culture and Arts: 7 cases
- Prisons: 4 cases



Distribution of Restrictions on the Use of Kurdish by Category (Q1 2025)

The highest number of restrictions occurred in the fields of media and culture and arts. Access to media outlets such as Mezopotamya Agency, JINNEWS, and others has been blocked. When Turkish-language pages of these outlets are censored, their Kurdish-language sections hosted under the same domains are also affected. Additionally, Kurdish artists and academics have faced significant pressure.

**Details include:**

- The phrase “Jin, Jiyan, Azadî” being deliberately excluded from the official minutes of the Parliament’s General Assembly,
- Bans on Kurdish banners or forced removal of such materials,
- Cancellation of Kurdish concerts and punishment of the artists involved,
- Prohibition of speaking Kurdish or sending/receiving letters in Kurdish in prisons,
- Suspension of accounts broadcasting in Kurdish on media platforms,

All of these incidents point to a systematic repression of Kurdish in the public domain.



## Public Space

### January

- DEM Party MP Meral Daniş Beştaş stated that in a secondary school in Erzurum's Karaçoban district, the forms for elective courses were prepared incomplete and students' right to choose Kurmanci, Zazaki, and other languages was restricted.

### March

- At Gebze Technical University, a group of 20 female students who wanted to march for International Women's Day on March 8 were prevented by the school administration on the grounds that Kurdish slogans would be chanted, and Kurdish signs would be carried.
- DEM Party MP Gülderen Varlı's microphone was switched off during her speech in the Turkish Grand National Assembly (TBMM) when she mentioned Jina Emîni's name, as it was assumed she would speak in Kurdish. The phrase "Jin, Jiyan, Azadî (Woman, Life, Freedom)" was not recorded in the parliamentary minutes.
- The banner prepared by Amedspor fans for the Sakaryaspor match, which read "They Will Ignore You" in both Kurdish and Turkish, was banned due to the Kurdish language. The issue was later resolved, and the banner was hung.
- After the detention of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, a Kurdish banner raised by a young person during a protest in Konya was taken down due to the reaction of Turkish protesters.

## Media

## January

- The official X (formerly Twitter) accounts of Mezopotamya Agency (with 263,000 followers), JINNEWS, and Yeni Yaşam were restricted. The new account subsequently created by Mezopotamya Agency was also suspended shortly after its launch.

## February

- The Adıyaman 2nd Criminal Judgeship of Peace imposed an access ban on Mezopotamya Agency's website on the grounds of "protecting national security and public order."

- The Kurdish service of Voice of America (VOA) was similarly blocked based on the same justification.

- Access to the YouTube, X, and Instagram accounts of journalist Abdurrahman Gök was blocked following a decision by the Ankara 6th Criminal Judgeship of Peace.

- The websites and social media accounts of Kurdish media outlets continued to face restrictions, including the Mezopotamya Agency website and JINNEWS's X account.

- Access to @jinnewskurd, the Kurdish-language X account of JINNEWS, was also blocked.

- The X accounts of JINNEWS and Xwebûn were rendered inaccessible within Turkey.

- Sözcü TV anchor Serap Belovacıklı refrained from broadcasting footage in which politician Ahmet Türk read aloud a letter written by PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan in Kurdish, made public on February 27. Belovacıklı stated: "We will air it once it is delivered in Turkish, the official language of the Republic of Turkey." She further explained the editorial choice with the following statement: "We don't air Kurdish because no one understands it." Similar editorial decisions were made by Habertürk TV and NTV, both of which omitted the Kurdish-language segment from their broadcasts, citing the same reasoning.

## **Culture and Arts**

### **January**

- The police raided the Kurdish Writers' Association building in Diyarbakır and confiscated 150 books and 1,500 newspaper copies.
- An academic from the Department of Kurdish Language and Literature at Muş Alparslan University has been subjected to an investigation for assigning Kurdish poetry in class. The investigation was initiated by the department administration, which cited the “political content of the books used in the course” as the official justification. The books that prompted the investigation are all poetry collections authored by Fatma Savcı (published by Avesta Publishing with approval from the Ministry of Culture), Arjen Arî (Sor Publishing), and Cegerxwîn (Lis Publishing). These books are listed in the university’s own library catalog and are legally available; there are no bans or legal proceedings against any of them.
- The singer Kasım Taşdoğan is sentenced to 30 months in prison for three Kurdish songs he sang in Kars and Çanakkale.

### **February**

- Seyda Perinçek, who wanted to give a concert in Kurdish in Japan, was detained and deported. It was alleged that the Turkish consulate tried to cancel the concert.

# Prisons

## January

- In Diyarbakır, Salim Gran, who was arrested in connection with the murder of Narin Gran, was prohibited from speaking Kurdish during phone calls with his family at Erzurum Dumlu High-Security Prison No. 1. Prison authorities blocked the use of Kurdish during family communication, restricting the detainee's right to use his native language.
- Prisoners in KırŖehir High Security Closed Prison were not given books in Kurdish.

## February

- According to the report of the Diyarbakır Bar Association, Kurdish letters are kept for 4-5 months in Erzincan Women's Prison.
- In Elazığ High Security Closed Prison No. 1, Kurdish books are not given to the prisoners and letters are not delivered to the prisoners.