

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

2 July 2026 index number EUR 44/1257/2026

TÜRKİYE: AUTHORITIES MUST END THE CRACKDOWN AHEAD OF THE NATO SUMMIT AND RESPECT THE RIGHTS TO FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY AND EXPRESSION

Amnesty International calls on the Turkish authorities to end their crackdown ahead of the 36th NATO Summit due to take place in Ankara on 7/8 July, including by lifting blanket protest bans, releasing everyone arbitrarily deprived of their liberty and respecting the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression. On 23 June, the Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor's Office announced¹ that a joint police and gendarmerie operation was conducted to detain 241 people, of whom 225 were taken into custody by 25 June for alleged links to armed groups.

As of 2 July 2026, at least 170 people have been remanded in pretrial detention, while at least 36 people were released under judicial control measures, including house arrest. Those remanded in prison under Türkiye's much criticized anti-terrorism legislation include journalist and human rights defender Yıldız Tar; Assoc. Prof. Dr. Emel Memiş Parmaksız of Ankara University's Department of Economics; lawyers Semra Demir and Kürşat Bafra; Nevzat Özer, Ankara Representative of the Turkish Foundation for Combating Soil Erosion, Reforestation and the Protection of Natural Habitats (TEMA Foundation) and 11 TEMA Foundation volunteers. The relevant authorities have failed to adequately explain or provide sufficient justification for these mass detention orders and subsequent remand decisions. On 29 June, 89 people were detained under the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations (Law No. 2911) as they took part in protests in Istanbul during the NATO Parliamentary Summit. All were released the following day.

In addition to the authorities imposing draconian restrictions on peaceful assembly and conducting mass detentions of hundreds of people, the Freedom of Expression Association reported that they have also blocked access to more than 20 X accounts, including those of journalists and campaign platforms, on grounds of "national security" and "public order", further restricting the rights to freedom of expression and access to information related to the upcoming NATO Summit.²

These violations were further exacerbated by a 13-day blanket ban on protests announced by the Ankara Governorate on 22 June ahead of the NATO Summit covering the entire province.³ Over the following days, similar blanket bans, imposed for prolonged periods, were also introduced in other provinces such as Adana, Bolu, Antalya, Elazığ, Eskişehir, Karabük, Konya, Sakarya and Mersin without any lawful justification. These excessively broad restrictions preventing the exercise of the freedom of peaceful assembly are unlawful under international human rights law: while national security, public order and the protection of the rights and freedoms of others may, in certain circumstances, constitute legitimate grounds for restricting the right to peaceful assembly, such restrictions are permissible exceptionally, and only where they are necessary and proportionate to the aim pursued. States have an obligation to respect and protect the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, expression and association guaranteed under international human rights law and standards. These blanket bans are incompatible with Türkiye's obligations under binding international human rights treaties as well as Türkiye's Constitution and must be lifted immediately.

Ahead of the Summit, public statements by a number of journalists indicated that they had been denied accreditation to cover the event. Preventing journalists from covering the NATO Summit by denying them accreditation constitutes an unjustified interference with the rights to media freedom and freedom of expression. The authorities must ensure that all journalists are able to attend the Summit in order to report and comment on developments and NATO allies should also be urging them to do so too.

Amnesty International calls on the Turkish authorities to cease this spate of serious violations of human rights by releasing all those arbitrarily detained, immediately lifting the sweeping and disproportionate restrictions that both violate and jeopardise the exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression.

¹ <https://x.com/ankaracbs/status/2069297658879942805/photo/1>

² <https://ifade.org.tr/engelliweb/nato-zirvesi-surecinde-milli-guvenlik-ve-kamu-duzeni-gerekcesiyle-erisime-engellenenler/>

³ <https://www.ankara.gov.tr/basin-aciklamasi220626>

Background

On 22 June, the Ankara Governorate announced a province-wide ban on “all open- and closed-air meetings, demonstrations and marches, press statements, hunger strikes, sit-ins, protest actions, rallies, the setting up of stands or tents, the distribution of leaflets, brochures or pamphlets, the hanging of banners or posters, and similar activities/events” from 00.00 on 28 June until 23.59 on 10 July 2026 (13 days). The Governorate justified the ban on the grounds of “national security, the reputation of the country, the peace and security of citizens, the maintenance of public order, the prevention of crime, the protection of the rights and freedoms of others, and ensuring the highest level of security for delegations attending the Summit.” It also cited the need to prevent unauthorized persons and vehicles from entering designated sensitive areas, including the Summit venue, locations where delegations will be accommodated, and transit routes used by delegations. Similar prolonged province-wide bans were subsequently announced in other provinces, including Adana, Bolu, Antalya, Elazığ, Eskişehir, Karabük, Konya, Sakarya and Mersin.

In response to public reports that journalists from several media outlets had been denied accreditation to cover the Summit, NATO Spokesperson Allison Hart stated on X: “NATO has long-standing media accreditation procedures for major events. For summits and ministerial meetings held outside NATO Headquarters, NATO relies on the host nation to provide assessments on journalists from their country to ensure access to the meeting site. We are in contact with Turkish authorities on accreditation for the NATO Summit in Ankara. It is very important for NATO that media can attend major events in person.”

Ends/