

CISST 2024 ANNUAL REPORT ON PRISONS



CISST
CEZA İNFAZ SİSTEMİNDE SİVİL TOPLUM DERNEĞİ
CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE PENAL SYSTEM



Editor: Jiyan Ay

Prepared by: Civil Society in the Penal System Association (CİSST)

Design: F20 Reklam ve Tanıtım



This publication was prepared with the support of the Swedish Embassy. The Civil Society in the Penal System Association is solely responsible for the content of this publication, and the report does not in any way represent the views of the Swedish Embassy, Sida.

Table of Contents

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	6
INTRODUCTION	7
CISST METHODOLOGY	8
I. THE SITUATION IN PRISONS AND PROMINENT RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN 2024	10
1. CAPACITY INCREASE AND OVERCROWDING	10
1.1. Penal Institution Statistics	10
1.2. Isolation-Based Regime: High-Security, S and Y Type Prisons	17
2. POVERTY IN PRISONS	18
3. DECISIONS OF THE ADMINISTRATION AND OBSERVATION BOARDS	20
4. PROBLEMS CONCERNING THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF PRISONS	22
4.1. Heating, Cooling, and Lighting	22
4.2. Hygiene	24
4.3. Toilets – Bathrooms	24
4.4. Food	26
4.5. Mattresses – Pillows	27
5. RIGHTS VIOLATIONS	27
5.1. Violations of the Right to Life	27
5.2. Torture and ill-treatment	28
5.2.1. Strip Search	31
5.2.2. Disciplinary Sanctions	31
5.2.3. Isolation	33
5.3. Access to Healthcare	37
5.3.1. Primary Healthcare Services	39
5.3.1.1. Infirmary	39
5.3.1.2. Dental Unit	40
5.3.1.3. Psychosocial Services	40
5.3.2. Secondary and Tertiary Healthcare Services	41
5.3.2.1. Shuttle Vehicles	41
5.3.2.2. Problems Experienced at Hospitals	41
5.3.2.3. Oral and Dental Health Services	42
5.4. Communication with the Outside World	43
5.4.1. Issues Related to Transfers Between Prisons	43
5.5. Freedom of Expression	44
5.5.1. Restrictions on Visits and Phone	44
5.5.2. Restrictions on Correspondence	46
5.5.3. Restrictions on Periodical and Non-periodical Publications	47
5.5.4. Restrictions on Radio and TV	49
5.5.5. Restriction on Petition	49
5.6. Hunger Strikes Against Rights Violations	49

II. PRISONERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS	51
1. CHILDREN IN PRISON	51
1.1. Definition	52
1.2. General Conditions	52
1.3. Prominent Issues	53
1.3.1. Changes in Legislation Regarding Children in Prison	54
1.3.2. Monitoring of Children in Prison	54
1.3.3. Children Between Aged 0-6 Held Together With Their Mothers	57
2. WOMEN PRISONERS	58
2.1. Definition	59
2.2. General Conditions	59
2.3. Prominent Issues	59
2.3.1. Access to Healthcare Services	60
2.3.2. Access to Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare and Sanitary Pads	60
2.3.3. Ward Searches and Body Searches	61
2.3.4. Transfers Between Prisons and Official Visits	62
2.3.5. Socialization and Communication with the Outside World	62
2.3.6. Economic Difficulties	63
2.3.7. Torture and ill-Treatment	63
3. LGBTI+ PRISONERS	66
3.1. Definition	67
3.2. General Conditions	67
3.3. Prominent Issues	68
3.3.1. Isolation	68
3.3.2. Communication with the Outside World	69
3.3.3. Access to Justice	69
3.3.4. Economic Difficulties	70
3.3.5. Access to Healthcare Services	71
3.3.6. Access to Healthcare Services Specific to Trans Prisoners	71
3.3.7. Torture and ill-treatment	73
4. PRISONERS WITH HEALTH CONDITIONS	74
4.1. Definition	75
4.2. General Conditions	75
4.3. Prominent Issues	76
4.3.1. Postponement of Execution Sentences and Forensic Medicine Institution	77
4.3.2. Prisoners with Serious Illnesses	78
4.3.3. Discrimination	78
4.3.4. Economic Difficulties	79
4.3.5. Transfer to Another Prison for Health Reasons	80
5. PRISONERS WITH DISABILITIES	82
5.1. Definition	83
5.2. General Conditions	83
5.3. Prominent Issues	84
5.3.1. Access to Healthcare Services	84
5.3.2. R Type Prisons and Forensic Medicine Institution	85
5.3.3. Accessibility	87
5.3.4. Disability Pension	88
5.3.5. Poverty of Persons with Disabilities	89

6. AGGRAVATED LIFE SENTENCE PRISONERS	90
6.1. Definition	91
6.2. General Conditions	91
6.3. Prominent Issues	92
6.3.1. Violations Stemming from Legislation	92
6.3.2. Isolation	95
6.3.3. Torture and ill-treatment	96
6.3.4. Access to Healthcare Services	96
6.3.5. Economic Difficulties	97
6.3.6. Socialization and Communication with the Outside World	98
7. STUDENT PRISONERS	100
7.1. Definition	101
7.2. General Conditions	101
7.3. Prominent Issues	101
7.3.1. Access to Educational Materials	102
7.3.2. Studying Conditions	103
7.3.3. University Examinations, School Choice and Enrollment Processes	104
7.3.4. School Commutes and Transfers	104
7.3.5. Computer Use and Internet Access	105
7.3.6. Economic Difficulties	105
7.3.7. Socialization and Communication with the Outside World	106
8. PRISON LABOR	107
8.1. Definition	108
8.2. General Conditions	108
8.3. Prominent Issues	109
8.3.1. Workshops Institution	109
8.3.2. Vocational Training Activities for Prisoners	110
9. FOREIGN PRISONERS	111
9.1. Definition	112
9.2. General Conditions	112
9.3. Prominent Issues	113
9.3.1. Language Barrieri	113
9.3.2. Access to Healthcare Services	114
9.3.3. Visits	114
9.3.4. Economic Difficulties	116
9.3.5. Transfer to Another Country or Prison	117
9.3.6. Discriminatio	117
9.3.7. Risk of Deportation	118
CONCLUSION	119

ABBREVIATIONS INDEX

MoJ	Ministry of Justice
ACEP	Smart Technologies Integration Project for Penal Institutions
CPT	European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
FMI	Forensic Medicine Institute
UN	United Nations
CISST	The Civil Society in Penal System Association
CTE	General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Houses
ISBN and ISSN	International Standard Book Number (International Standard Serial Number)
İHD	Human Rights Association
IKM	Custodial Staff
KDK	The Ombudsman Institution
LGBTI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex
OHAL	State of Emergency
SSI	Social Security Institution
SYDV	Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation
TBMM	Grand National Assembly of Türkiye
TIHEK	Human Rights and Equality Institution of Türkiye
TİTCK	Turkish Medicines and Medical Devices Agency
TÜİK	Turkish Statistical Institute
UYAP	National Judiciary Information System

INTRODUCTION

Our report, the first of which we published in 2019 and will continue to publish annually, was produced within the scope of the project “Improving the Conditions of Prisons and Prisoners in Türkiye in line with International Human Rights and Values,” which we carried out with the support of the Swedish Embassy. Our reporting activities, which focus on monitoring and advocacy, aim to produce verifiable information periodically, to increase knowledge about prisons through annual and thematic reports, and to disseminate such information. As prisons are inaccessible to non-governmental organizations and that conditions for on-site monitoring are not met makes it necessary to prepare reports using different methods. The Civil Society in Penal System Association (CISST) prepares its reports by providing data comparable with information sources and the database it developed. With these activities, CISST aims to decrease the rights violations in prisons, contribute to improvement of prisoners’ rights in a way that covers all prisoners in prisons of Türkiye, and increase awareness of prisoners about legal remedies.

The State of Emergency conditions that started in 2016, along with the COVID-19 pandemic measures in 2020, and the economic crisis in recent years have further exacerbated prison conditions, increased the difficulties of prison life and complicated prisoners’ access to their rights. Numerous rights violations, brought about by the increasing isolation in prisons and economic problems, have deeply affected both prisoners and their families. Children, women, LGBTI+, prisoners with disabilities, aggravated life, students, workers, and foreign prisoners, referred to as prisoners with special needs, faced various problems due to their unique situation.

This report offers a panoramic overview of what happened in Türkiye prisons throughout 2024. The general situation of prisons and rights violations are discussed in the first part of the report; the second part focuses on the problems of prisoners with special needs and recommends policies to solve these problems.

Table1 : Number of Prisoners CiSST Corresponded With, According to Prison Type

Prison Type	Total Number of Prisoners
Closed Penal Institution	853
High-Security Penal Institution	300
Women's Closed Penal Institution	157
Children's Closed Penal Institution	16
Open Penal Institution	148
Open Penal Institution Affiliated to Closed Penal Institution	31
Women's Open Penal Institution	10

CiSST uses a database to record and categorise letters and applications received via its helpline. This database depends on the classification of the information on prisons - received by CiSST through letters, helpline, and lawyer visits - by means of the indicators prepared for the monitoring of the claims of rights violations. CiSST obtained the quantitative data concerning the alleged rights violations in this report from this database.² Some of the data is also shared publicly through the CiSST Maps website where it is presented in a map-based format.

CiSST attempted to reach the prisoners - who could not submit their applications through letters, or phone calls from their kin - through lawyer visits despite its limited means. In 2024, 78 prisoners were reached via 33 different prison visits. The observation reports prepared at the end of each visit contain information about prisoners' complaints as conveyed to the visiting lawyers and contribute to the data used in this report.

Moreover, to access reliable and comparable information, CiSST utilized the strategic activity reports and statistics of the institutions that carry out studies on prisons and used methods such as applications for the right to information and parliamentary questions as sources as well.

The findings of this report are limited to the statistics and data disclosed to the public and the complaints and allegations of violations of rights received by CiSST. The aforementioned database was used in the classification and analysis of these complaints and allegations of rights violations. The numeric data concerning the distribution of complaints and allegations of rights violations received from prisons are shared in the relevant sections. Under some sections, the numbers concerning the complaints and rights violations conveyed to CiSST by prisoners do not reflect the intensity of the qualitative data obtained by CiSST specialists regarding those rights violations. In addition, increasing correspondence fees, restrictions on freedom of expression, and the wide discretion of the Administration and Observation Boards have also emerged as significant factors affecting prisoners in their ability to submit complaints.

² Certain data recorded by CiSST experts in CiSST Database Date search on CiSST Maps Website.

I. THE SITUATION IN PRISONS AND PROMINENT RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN 2024

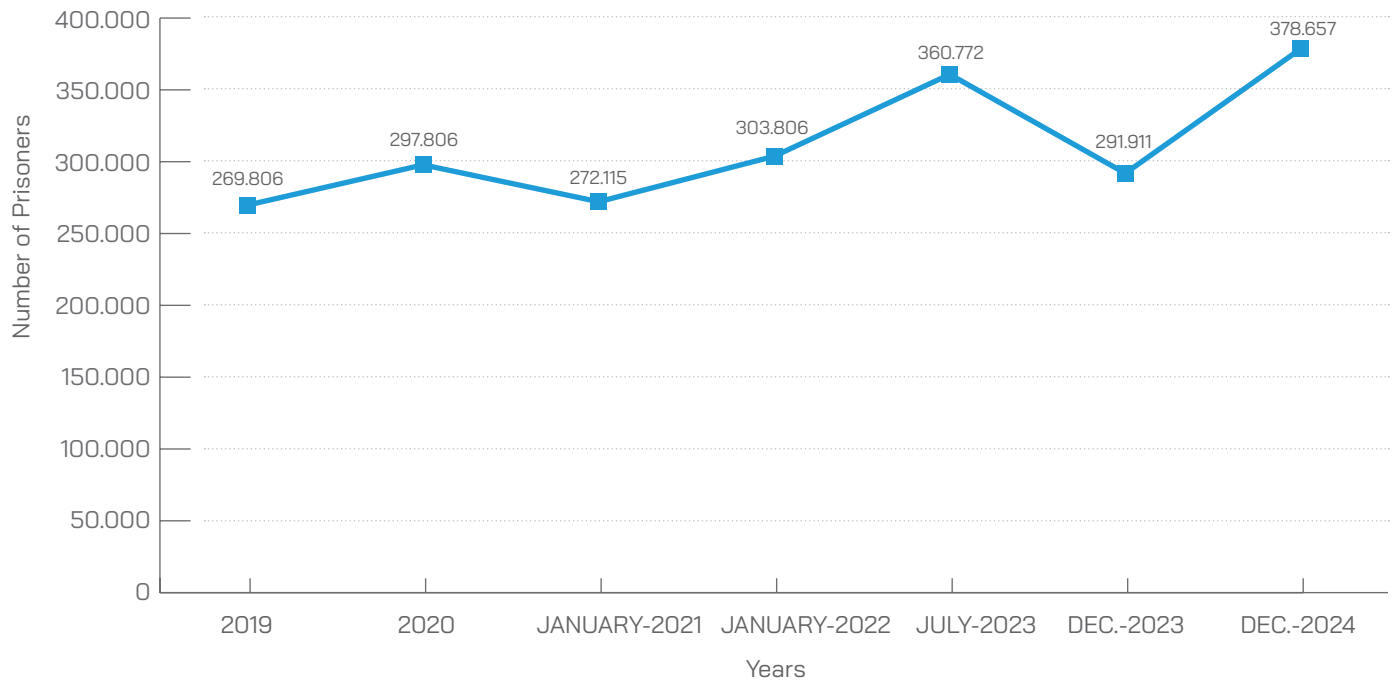
1. CAPACITY INCREASE AND OVERCROWDING

1.1. Penal Institution Statistics

There is a continuous increase in Türkiye’s prison population and a persistent overcrowding in prisons of Türkiye. The number of prisoners reached 297,806 in 2020, up from 269,806 in 2019. Although this number decreased to 272,115 in January 2021 after the amendment of the law in 2021, it quickly reincreased and reached 303,806 in January 2022.³

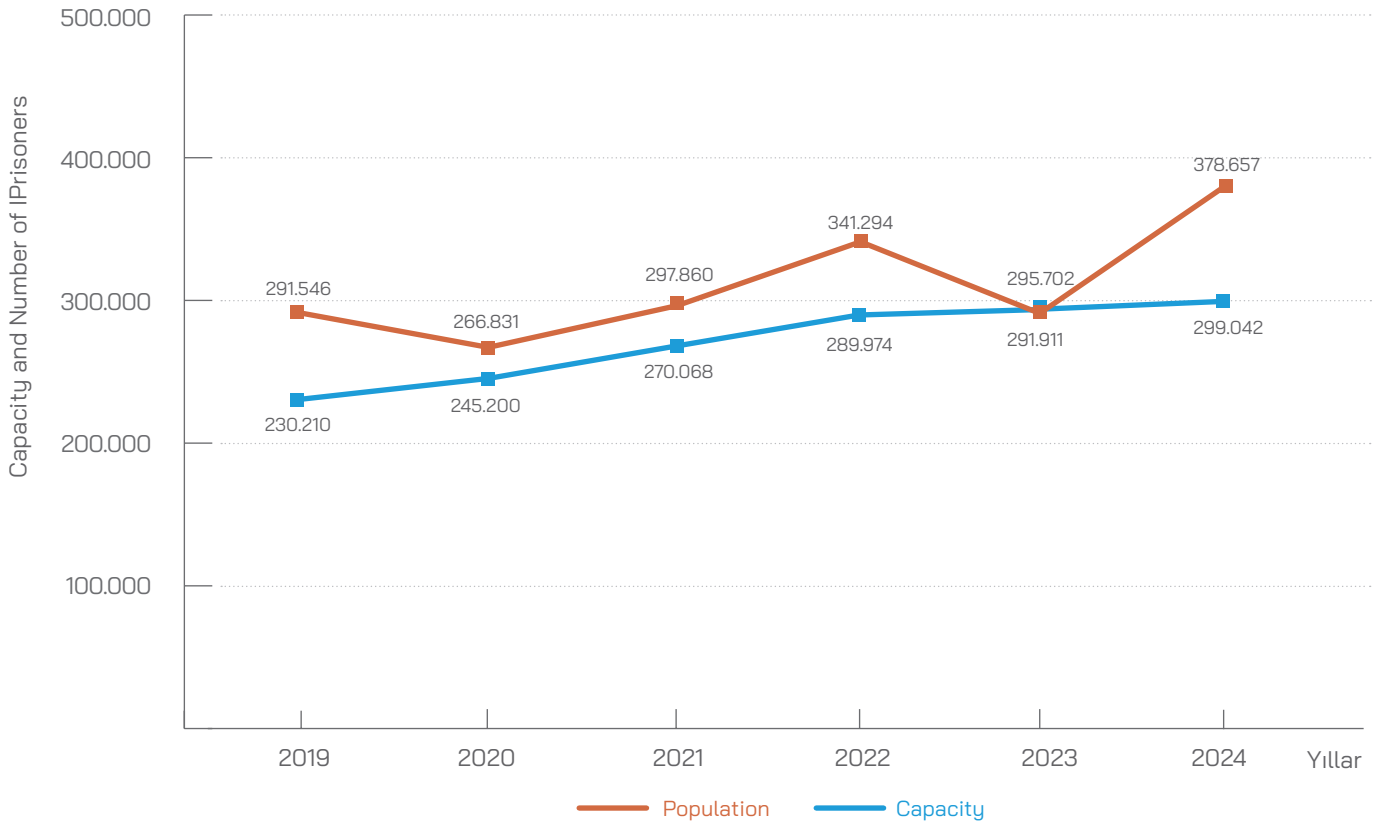
According to CTE’s June 2024 data, 337,760 prisoners were being held in Türkiye’s prisons, 73,348 in open prisons and 264,412 in closed penal institutions. The number of registered people in prisons on December 2024 was 378,657, a 29.7% (86,657 people) increase compared to the same date in 2023.

Changes in the Prison Population Over the Years



³ Civil Society in Penal System Association, (2022). CISST 2021 Prison Report. <https://cisst.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/yillik-hapishaneler-raporu-2021.pdf>. Accessed on: 19.08.2024

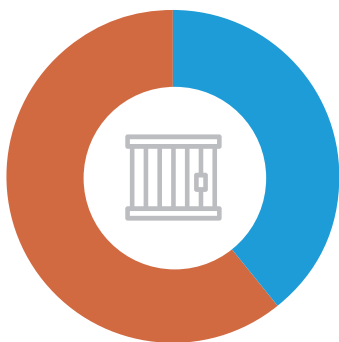
Changes in Prison Population and Capacity Over the Years



The new arrangement on the execution of sentences, criticized for completely excluding political prisoners, was described as an implicit amnesty. However in the following months, the prison population continued to increase and complaints concerning the overcrowding continued to be received from prisoners.

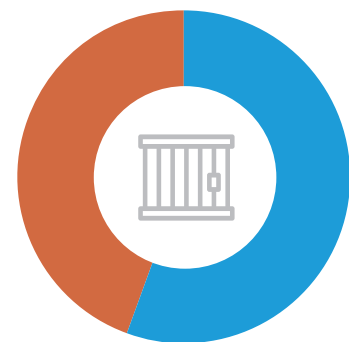
Is the person staying in an increased capacity ward?

Yes	11
No	17



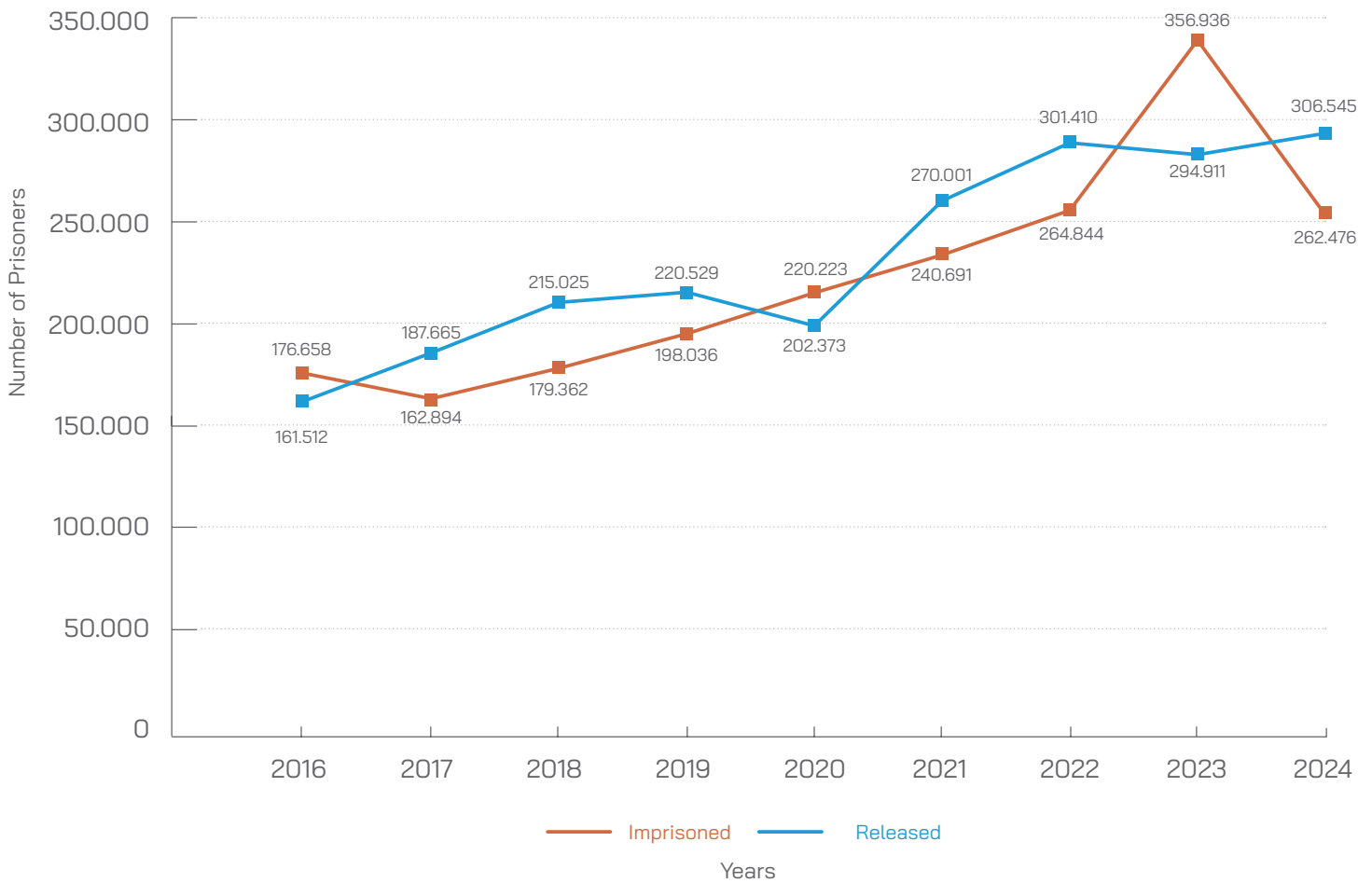
Is the person staying in a ward with more people than its capacity?

Yes	20
No	16



The Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK) shared the number of prisoners entering and leaving prisons in the statistics of the Penal Execution Institution. According to this data, 294,991 people were admitted into prisons in 2023, while 356,936 people were released. In 2024, 306,545 people were admitted to prisons, while 262,476 people were released.⁴ A slight increase in the number of people entering prisons was recorded in 2024. While the number of prisoners released from prisons increased in 2023, there was a decrease in 2024.

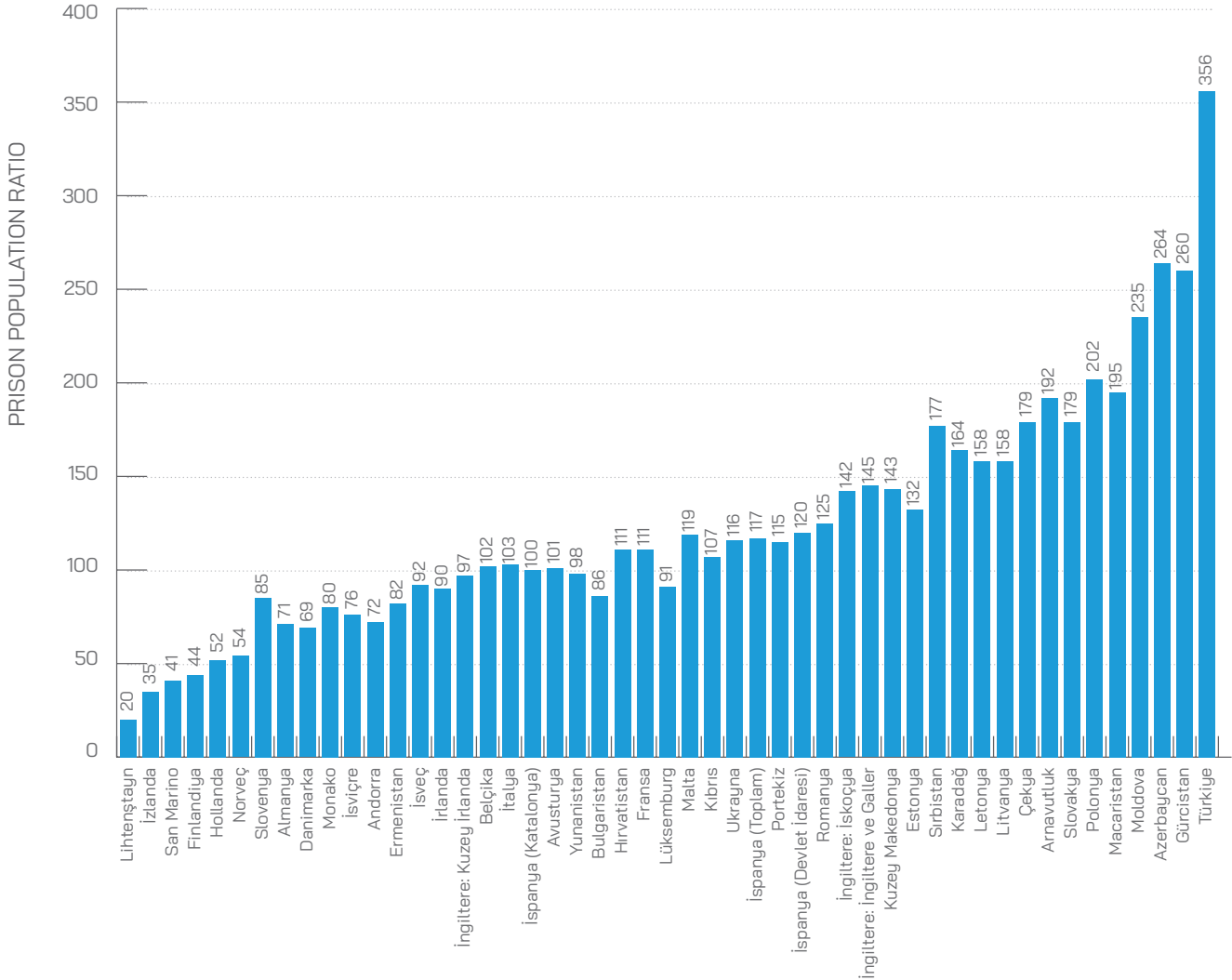
Number of Imprisoned and Released Prisoners



As of December 2024, the number of people registered in prisons increased by 29.7%, compared to the same date in 2023, reaching 378,657. According to the Council of Europe Penal Statistics report, Türkiye has, by far, the highest rate of prisoners per 100,000 people in Europe.⁵ Similarly, the 2024 SPACE Report indicates that Türkiye ranks highest among Europe in terms of prison population per 100,000 people, release rate, escape rate, and number of prisoners per staff member. Taken together, these indicate a high level of prisoner turnover in Türkiye.

⁴ Ministry of Justice, General Directorate of Judicial Records and Statistics, (2024). Distribution of prisoners entering and leaving penal institutions. Access Date: August 19, 2025. <https://adlisicil.adalet.gov.tr/Home/SayfaDetay/ceza-infaz-kurumu-istatistikleri-2024-haber-bulteni-yayimlandi05052025091520>
⁵ Council of Europe Portal, (2024). Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics, SPACE I 2024. https://wp.unil.ch/space/files/2025/09/250924_rapport-space-i-2024.pdf Access date: 19.08.2025

Prison Population Rates (prisoners per 100,000 inhabitants)⁶



TÜİK data also shares information on the changing numbers of those who have been sentenced and those who are detained over the years, as well as breakdown by gender and nationality.⁷

⁶ The report's data is based on January 2024.

⁷ Ministry of Justice, General Directorate of Judicial Records and Statistics, (2024). Distribution of the prison population by gender, status, and nationality as of December 31, 2016-2024. <https://adlisicil.adalet.gov.tr/Home/SayfaDetay/ceza-infaz-kurumu-istatistikleri-2024-haber-bulteni-yayimlandi05052025091520>. Accessed on 19.08.2025.

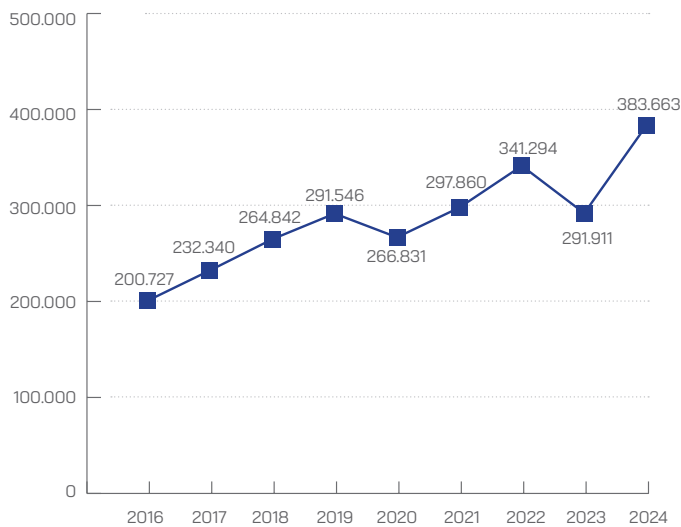
Table2 : Gender, Status, and Nationality Distribution of Prison Population as of December 31 (2016-2024)

Years	Total Number of Prisoners	Number of Male Prisoners	Number of Female Prisoners	Sentenced	Prisoners on Remand	Citizens	Foreign Citizens
2016	200.727	192.354	8.373	128.086	72.641	196.285	4.442
2017	232.340	222.444	9.896	153.079	79.261	225.994	6.346
2018	264.842	254.426	10.416	208.950	55.892	256.264	8.578
2019	291.546	280.114	11.432	245.160	46.386	281.544	10.002
2020	266.831	256.231	10.600	224.924	41.907	256.622	10.209
2021	297.860	286.183	11.677	259.825	38.035	285.815	12.045
2022	341.294	327.224	14.070	298.952	42.342	326.266	15.028
2023	291.911	279.760	12.151	246.620	45.291	279.497	12.414
2024	383.663	366.760	16.903	55.224	328.439	368.617	15.046

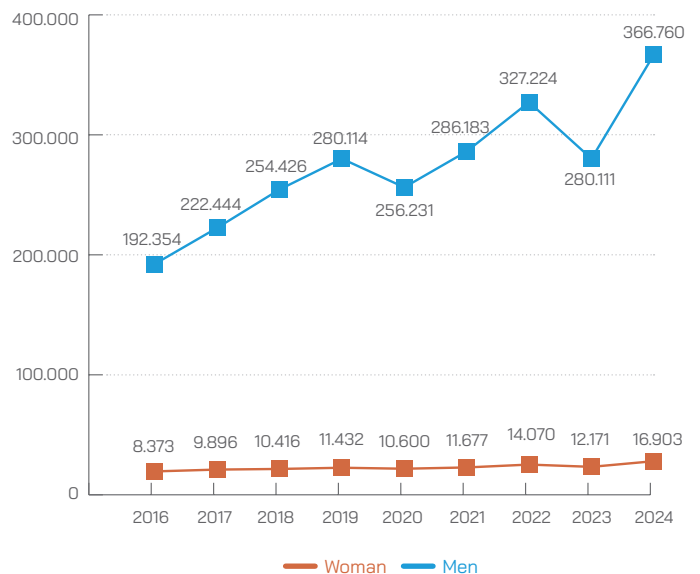
In 2024, 95.6% of the total prison population were men and 4.4% were women. The rate of sentenced prisoners was 85.6%, and the rate of prisoners on remand was 14.4%. The rate of prisoners who are nationals was 96.1% and foreign nationals 3.9%.⁸ Within this population, there were 1,449 sentenced prisoners aged 12-17 who had not yet reached the age of 18.

While the total number of people in prison was 200,727 in 2016, this number reached 291,911 in 2023 and then to 383,663 in 2024. There has been a 90% increase in the prison population from 2016 to 2024. Additionally, the population increased by 31.4% in 2024 compared to 2023. The total prison population in Türkiye exceeds the total capacity of prisons.

Total Population



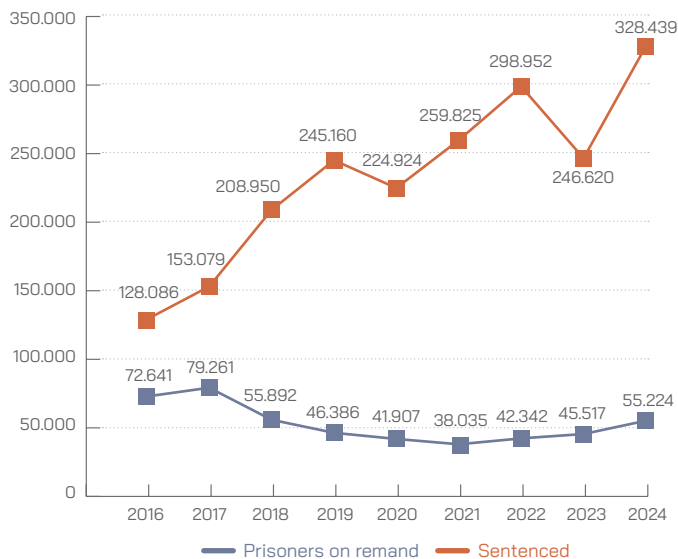
Gender Distribution of Prisoners



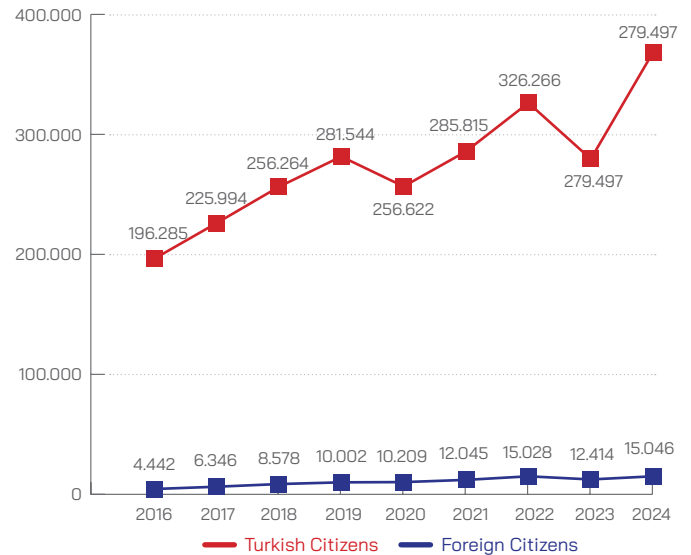
⁸ Ministry of Justice, General Directorate of Judicial Records and Statistics , (2024). Distribution of prison population by gender, status, and nationality as of December 31, 2016-2024. <https://adlisicil.adalet.gov.tr/Home/SayfaDetay/ceza-infaz-kurumu-istatistikleri-2024-haber-bulteni-yayimlandi05052025091520>. Accessed on 19.08.2025.

While the rate of sentenced prisoners was 63.8% in 2016, rising to 85.6% in 2024. The increase in the sentenced prisoners rate is a reflection of a change in policies on the execution of sentences. On the other hand, the rate of prisoners on remand fell from 36.2% in 2016 to 14.4% in 2024. Furthermore, despite the variations in the number of foreign prisoners in some years, we observe that this number has generally increased.

Population of Prisoners on Remand and Sentenced



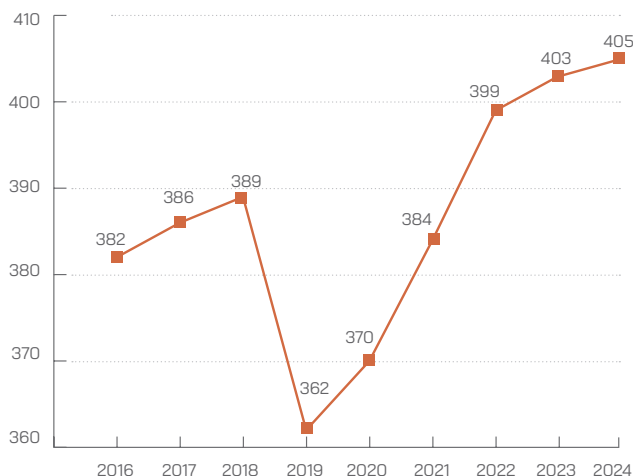
Turkish and Foreign Citizens Populatio



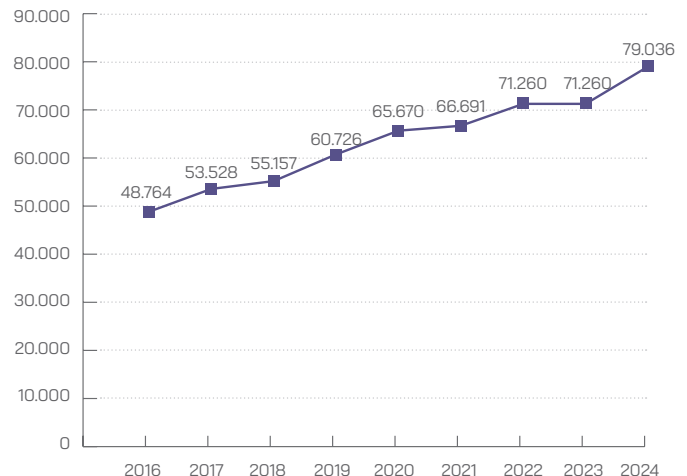
Data shows a steady increase in the number of penal institutions, beds, staff, and prisoners. In 2020, due to the impact of COVID-19 permits, the prison population and the number of prisoners per staff decreased slightly for a short period, but increased again in 2021. While prison population declined in 2023, it increased again at the end of 2024, exceeding 383,663.

Table 3: Number, population, staff status, and population of prisons as of December 31, 2016-2024

Number of Prisons



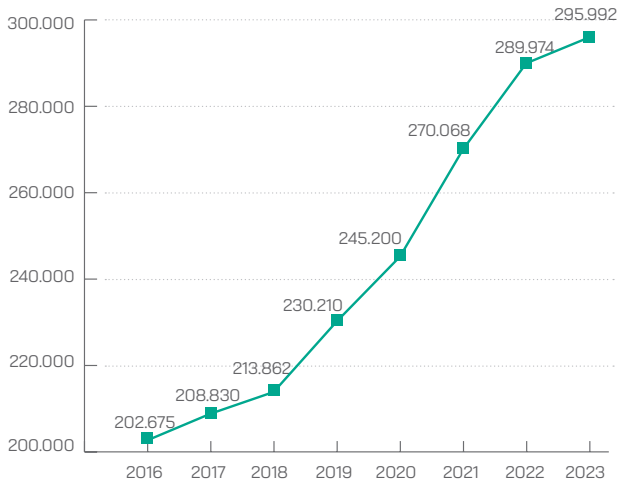
Number of Prison Staff



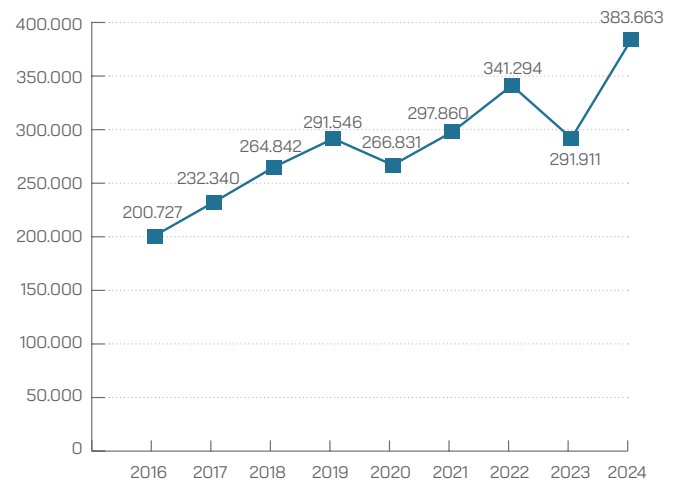
⁹ Ministry of Justice, General Directorate of Judicial Records and Statistics, (2024). Number, capacity, staffing, and population of penal institutions as of December 31, 2016-2024. <https://adlisicil.adalet.gov.tr/Home/SayfaDetay/ceza-infaz-kurumu-istatistikleri-2024-haber-bulteni-yayimlandi05052025091520>. Accessed on 19.08.2025.

Data shows a steady increase in the number of penal institutions, beds, staff, and prisoners. In 2020, due to the impact of COVID-19 permits, the prison population and the number of prisoners per staff decreased slightly for a short period, but increased again in 2021. While prison population declined in 2023, it increased again at the end of 2024, exceeding 383,663.

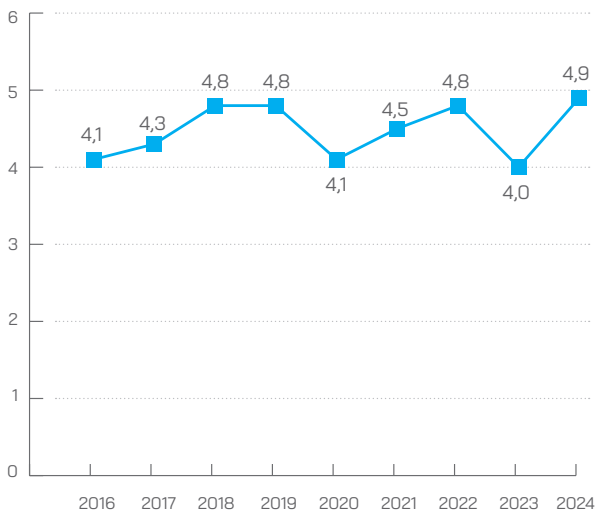
Yatak Sayısı



Ceza İnfaz Kurumu Nüfusu



Prison Population Per Staff Member



Between 2016 and 2024, the number of penal institutions in Türkiye fluctuated, experiencing a decline in 2019 and a general upward trend until 2024. In 2024, eight new prisons were opened, and four prisons were closed due to their location in city centers and physical conditions.¹⁰ The number of penal institution staff has shown a steady increase but has not kept up with the rate of increase in the prison population. The number of prisoners per staff peaked in 2024.

An analysis of prison data shows that the number of closed prisons fell to 273 at the beginning of 2024. The number of open prisons increased from 99 in 2023 to 100 at the end of 2024. The number of women's closed prisons increased from 11 to 12 at the end of 2024, reflecting either an increase in the number of women prisoners or the inadequacy of existing prisons. Total capacity rose from 297,200 in 2023 to 299,042 at the end of 2024. This indicates that prison capacity has been increased and new prisons have been opened. However, it also indicates that the increase in prison capacity has remained low compared to the rising occupancy rate and number of prisoners.

¹⁰ Ministry of Justice, (2025). 2024 Activity Report. <https://rayp.adalet.gov.tr/resimler/1/dosya/adalet-bakanligi-2024-yili-faaliyet-raporu12-03-20254-50-pm.pdf>

Table 4 : Number of Prisons in 2022-2024

Prison Type	2022	2023	2024
Closed Prison	277	274	273
Open Prison	88	99	100
Open Penal Institution for Minors	4	4	4
Women's Closed Prison	10	11	12
Women's Open Prison	8	8	8
Children's Closed Prison	9	9	9

1.2. Isolation-Based Regime: High-Security, S and Y Type Prisons

S and Y Type Prisons attracted the attention of the public and human rights defenders after they became operational in 2021, and there have been many complaints from prisoners about the conditions of detention of these prisons. These facilities establish an "isolation-based regime" as they deepen confinement and severely restrict prisoners' communication with each other and with the outside world. They consist of single and three-person cells. Type S prisons are designed as two-story prisons with a capacity of approximately 550 people, and Type Y prisons are designed as three-story prisons with a capacity of approximately 300 people.

According to the latest statistics announced by the CTE, in 2024 there are 7 S Type, 13 Y Type and 22 high security penal institutions in Türkiye.¹¹ Location of these prisons outside urban centres makes it difficult for families, visitors, and lawyers to access them, further intensifying the isolation. Prisoners have also informed CSOs of various infrastructure problems in these prisons including inadequate heating, water shortages and poor living conditions in general.

Prisoners are transferred to these prisons against their will and apply to CSOs claiming that many of their rights have been violated in this process. The situation itself also causes prisoners to be exposed to various violations of rights. These prisons were built especially for prisoners serving aggravated life sentences and those classified as "dangerous." However, subjecting prisoners who do not fall into these categories to the same aggravated regime leads to serious human rights concerns. This situation is closely monitored and reported by human rights defenders and relevant CSOs.

In 2024, CISST received a total of 542 applications from Type S prisons, 25 from Type Y prisons, 402 from Type F High Security prisons, and 740 from high security prisons.¹²

¹¹ General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Houses, (2024). Types of Penal Institutions. <https://cte.adalet.gov.tr/Home/haritaliste>

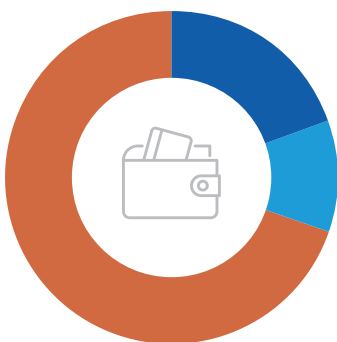
¹² CISST, (2025). CISST Maps. <https://haritalar.cisst.org.tr/haritalar/vaka>

2. POVERTY IN PRISONS

The economic crisis in Türkiye has led to an increase in prison canteen prices, worsening poverty among prisoners. These increases make it difficult for prisoners to meet their basic needs from the canteens, and many have difficulty accessing essential products such as toothpaste, soap and clean drinking water. The high frequency of prisoners coming from low socioeconomic conditions exacerbates these problems. The constant rise in prices deepens the persistent difficulties of prisoners in meeting their basic needs. The economic crisis has brought a deep level of poverty among prisoners who are already experiencing multidimensional poverty, causing problems in communication with the outside world, difficulties in meeting even their basic nutritional and hygiene needs, and an inability to cover travel expenses when requesting a transfer to be with their families or to attend funerals¹³ (In 2024, a total of 150,000 TL was requested from a prisoner to benefit from this right¹⁴) or subsequently increasing their debts. In addition, in 2024, the prosecution of prisoners’ families, relatives, or friends for depositing money into prisoners’ accounts is being used as a measure to prevent them from receiving financial support outside of prison.^{15,16}

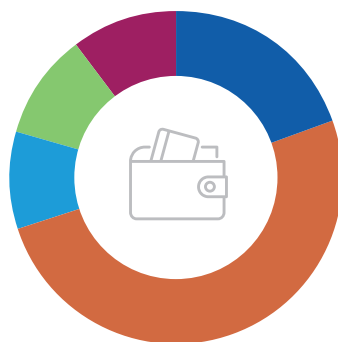
Do they have an income?

Partially available	26
Yes	14
None	98



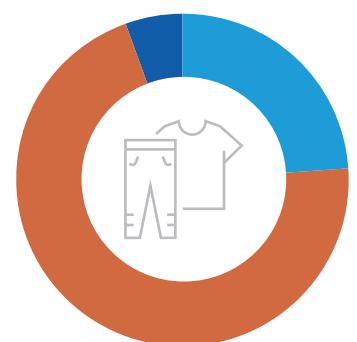
Why is there no income?

No communication with family	27
Family has no income	69
Other	13
There is a job opportunity, but they are not being employed	14
No job opportunities	14



Is there a problem accessing clothing?

Yes	18
No	53
Partially	4



¹³ When prisoners in closed prisons lose a family member, they must cover both their own and the gendarmerie’s round-trip travel and accommodation expenses to attend the funeral. For detailed information, see the Regulation on Excuse Permits Granted to Convicts and Detainees Due to the Death or Illness of Their Relatives.

¹⁴ Duvar, (2024). 150,000 lira funeral fee demanded from Group Yorum member in prison.

<https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/cezaevindeki-grup-yorum-uyesinden-150-bin-lira-cenaze-parasi-istendi-haber-1726167>

¹⁵ Keskin, E. (2024). Mother who deposited money for her son in prison sentenced for financing terrorism.

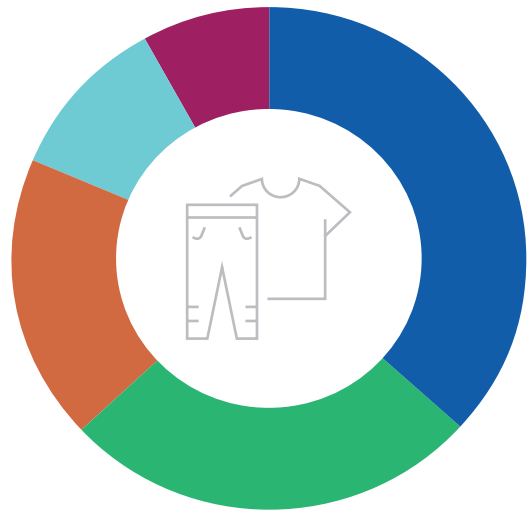
<https://kisadalga.net/haber/gundem/cezaevindeki-ogluna-para-yatiran-anneye-terorizmin-finansmanindan-ceza-113194>

¹⁶ Human Rights Association, (2024). Depositing Money into Prisoners’ Accounts Is Not a Crime! Stop Judicial Pressure.

<https://www.ihd.org.tr/mahpuslarin-hesaplarina-para-yatirilmesi-suc-degildir-yargi-baskisina-son-verilsin/>

Problems accessing clothing

Due to shape	14
Due to color	10
Not accepted from outside and required to purchase from the canteen	7
Mandatory uniform policy	4
Requested from the administration but unable to obtain	3



In general, many prisoners’ relatives have either been unable to visit prisons due to the economic crisis, or there has been a significant decline in visits. Due to the economic crisis, the number of those who could not visit prisoners in remote cities and those who could not send letters has increased considerably compared to previous years. Visitation rights for relatives of the prisoners sentenced to aggravated life imprisonment continued to be limited. Due to the worsening economic crisis, the inability of relatives to visit prisoners held in remote facilities continued to lead to violations of their rights. Prisoners’ relatives have been unable to visit the prisons especially if they are foreign nationals, have health conditions or disabilities, or are elderly.

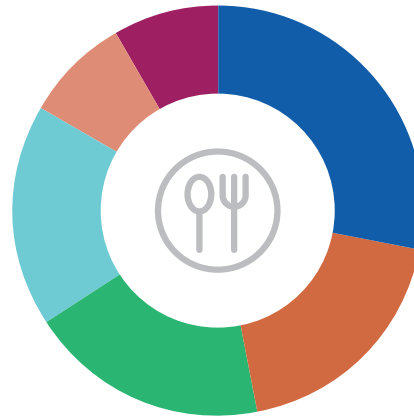
What does the economic crisis prevent access to?

Workshop materials	8
Fridge	8
Journal	7
Other	30
Additional food	11
Electricity bill	11
Books	15
Personal care products	18
Radio	5
Tea kettle-urn	4
Cigarettes and other necessities	5
Phone Card	4
TV	9



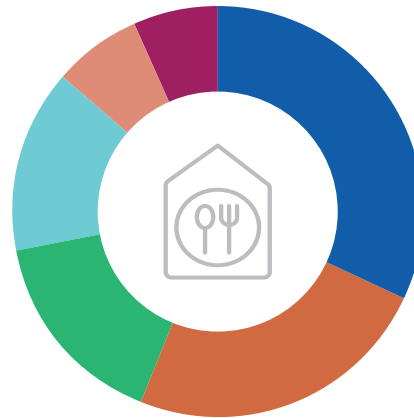
Problems experienced with the external canteen

Expensiveness	24
Lack of product variety	16
Product not being provided	16
Absence of the product	15
Other	7
Poor quality	7



Problems experienced with the internal canteen

Expensiveness	54
Lack of product variety	41
Absence of the product	27
Product not being provided	24
Poor quality	12
Other	11



3. DECISIONS OF THE ADMINISTRATION AND OBSERVATION BOARDS

Since 2020, the decisions of the administration and observation boards have been characterized by subjectivity and arbitrary practices, which has been a significant problem. These boards, which evaluate the behavior of prisoners, usually consist of prison staff and administrative officials. This causes the decisions taken about the prisoners to be far from impartiality and objectivity. For example, assessments of whether a prisoner is “of good behaviour” may have been based on personal judgments and biases. These practices have led to the unjust punishment or restriction of the rights of some prisoners. This was also noted by the Concluding Observations of the United Nations (UN) Committee Against Torture, which recommended a review of the Regulation on Observation and Classification Centers and the Assessment of Convicts.¹⁷

Furthermore, the wide discretionary power of boards has led to a lack of transparency and accountability issues. There is not enough information and oversight mechanisms on how the decisions are taken, what criteria are used and how prisoners can appeal these decisions.

¹⁷ Human Rights Foundation of Turkey, (2024). Alternative Report Submitted to the United Nations Committee Against Torture on Türkiye’s Fifth Periodic Report and the United Nations Committee Against Torture’s Concluding Observations on Türkiye’s Fifth Periodic Report (CAT/C/TUR/CO/5). <https://tihv.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/TIHV-Iskenceye-Karsi-Komite-Alternatif-Raporu-ve-Komitenin-Sonuc-Gozlemleri.pdf>

In this regard, 81 applications were made to CISST in 2024. According to data from the Human Rights Association (İHD), between 2021 and October 2024, the release of 501 prisoners was postponed multiple times for 3, 6, 9 months, and up to one year.¹⁸

The minutes of the parliament dated June 12, 2024, state that in 2024, 119,000 prisoners were released on good behavior by decision of the Administration and Observation Boards, while the requests of 8,521 prisoners were rejected.¹⁹

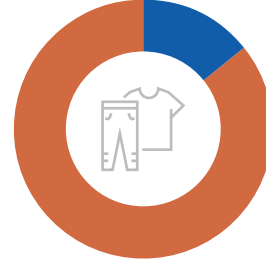
Did the administration and observation board extend the sentence?

■ Yes	65
■ No	1



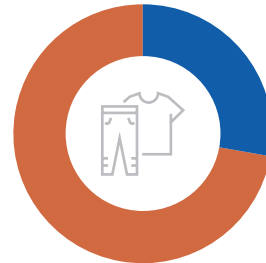
Has the reassessment exceeded the one-year period?

■ Yes	3
■ No	18



Did the reassessment period last less than 6 months?

■ Yes	7
■ No	18



EDUCATION AND TRAINING SERVICE EVALUATION CRITERIA	Number of Cases
Successfully completed social, cultural, vocational, and sports courses (0-150 hours-151 hours and above)	2
Participation in out-of-course artistic activities such as hobby workshop, handicraft works, music, theater, painting, and literary studies etc.	2
Regular participation in programs such as courses, training, ward lessons and moral education conducted by the spiritual guidance unit and individual interviews for spiritual counseling	1

¹⁸ Human Rights Association, (2024). Administrative and Monitoring Boards Preventing the Release of Prisoners Should Be Abolished. <https://www.ihd.org.tr/mahpusların-tahliyelerini-engelleyen-idare-ve-gozlem-kurullari-iptal-edilsin-2/>

¹⁹ Grand National Assembly of Türkiye Human Rights Investigation Commission Minutes Journal, (2024). <https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/Tutanaklar/TutanakGoster/3279>

SECURITY AND SURVEILLANCE SERVICE EVALUATION CRITERIA	Number of Cases
Whether the person facilitates the work of the administration and institution personnel in general and partial search and counts	1
Whether or not they pay attention to personal care	1
Whether the person unnecessarily engages the administration and officials with their attitudes and behaviors	1

PSYCHO-SOCIAL ASSISTANCE SERVICE EVALUATION CRITERIA	Number of Cases
When considering the way the crime is perceived, the attitude towards the victim (if any), and whether remorse is felt, is there a risk of reoffending?	8
When considering how the offender perceives the crime, their attitude toward the victim (if any), and whether they feel remorse, is the risk of harm to society and the victim low?	5
Participation in individual counseling sessions aimed at helping them cope with their psychosocial issues	1
Participation in social, cultural, and sporting activities	1
When the interviews, group work, and observations are evaluated together, whether they have the ability to solve problems	1

MANAGEMENT SERVICE EVALUATION CRITERIA	Number of Cases
Whether the person has shown due diligence in complying with the rules set for the purpose of order and security of penal institutions	4
Whether the person was punished with solitary confinement	2
Their attitude and behavior regarding the protection of institutional property and the use of consumables during training and work in accordance with conservation rules	1
Whether the person was reprimanded and suspended from some activities	1

4. PROBLEMS CONCERNING THE INFRASTRUCTURE OF PRISONS

4.1. Heating, Cooling, and Lighting

Prisons, which become the living space of prisoners, should be built, arranged and renewed taking into account the geographical and climate conditions of the place where they are located. Ventilation areas not being used to the maximum extent in the periods specified in international standards²⁰ restricts both the movement space of prisoners and causes a lack of ventilation in the wards holding more prisoners than their capacity. The insufficient sized windows that also do not allow sufficient daylight are also among the complaints conveyed. Increasing temperatures with the climate crisis also cause prisoners to experience health problems in prisons without central ventilation.

²⁰ ECHR case law states that the minimum personal space in prisons should be 3 square meters.

What kind of problems are experienced in the ward?

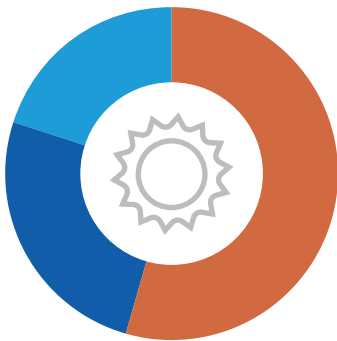
No sunlight	33	Dirty	12
Narrow	29	Sleeps on the ground	12
Stuffy	22	Insufficient lighting	9
Crowded	22	Smoking	3
Other	15	Noisy	1
Damp	14		



Among the complaints received from prisoners, it was also stated that the densely woven wire meshes fitted on the ventilation windows in high security prisons prevent the flow of fresh air into the cells and wards. Keeping the recreational areas closed during the changes in weather, such as fluctuating temperatures and fog or humidity, also prevented access to fresh air.

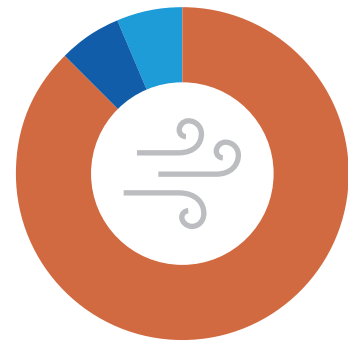
Sufficiently heated?

Yes	30
No	14
Partially	11



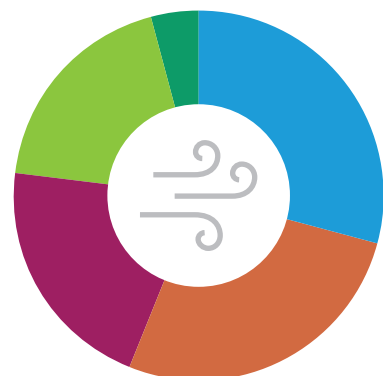
Is there central ventilation?

Yes	28
No	2
Partially	2



What is the reason for not being able to heat?

Other	14
Radiators are not being heated sufficiently	13
Insufficient number of heaters	10
Radiators are too small	9
No building insulation	2

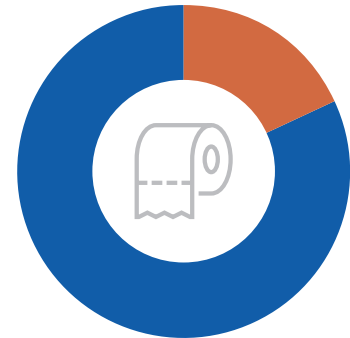


4.2. Hygiene

Prisoners themselves clean the areas they live in. The complaints conveyed by prisoners regarding this issue can be listed as general hygiene measures in prisons, problems experienced by prisoners in ensuring personal hygiene, and obstacles in accessing cleaning supplies. Given that prisoners get these supplies from the canteen for a price, it is not difficult to anticipate that it will not be possible for prisoners with poor economic means to access sufficient supplies. In 2024, prisoners’ purchasing power has declined further compared to previous years, and they have also experienced problems accessing hygiene materials free of charge.

How Do They Access Cleaning Supplies?

Provided by the Administration	4
Purchased from the canteen	18



What cleaning supplies are unavailable?

Other	6	Toothbrush	1
General hygiene supplies	5	Toothpaste	1
Bucket	3	Soap	1
Laundry detergent	2	Laundry line	1
Squeegee	2	Shampoo	1
Dishwashing detergent	1		

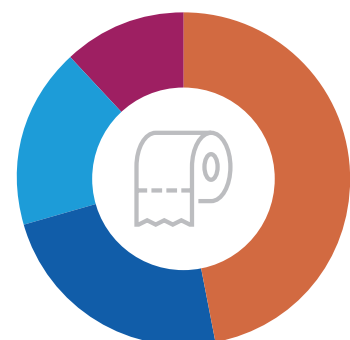


4.3. Toilet – Bathroom

Continuous access to hygiene products has become extremely important in order to ensure regular personal hygiene after the pandemic. In 2024 too, prisoners stated that the number of sinks was insufficient and that they could not maintain their personal hygiene because there were not enough hygiene materials in the toilets and bathrooms. Frequent water outages in the wards, the provision of hot water for limited periods, and dirty water also demonstrate that prisoners’ right to access clean water is violated.

How Many People Share a Toilet?

1-5	8
5-10	4
20-30	3
10-20	2



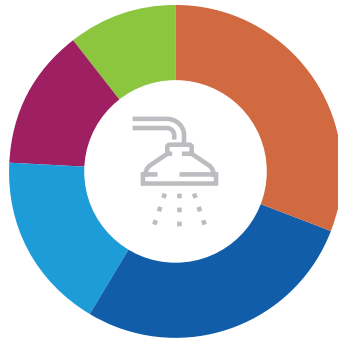
Problems with the toilet

Dirty	9
Other	7
Old	4
Small	4
Short using time	3
Alaturka	2



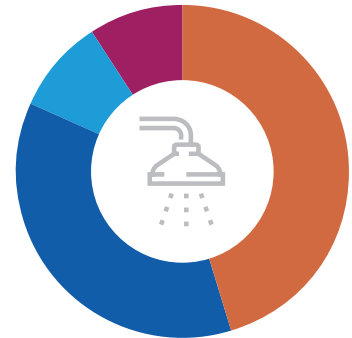
Problems with the bathroom

Other	9
Short using time	8
Dirty	5
Small	4
Old	3



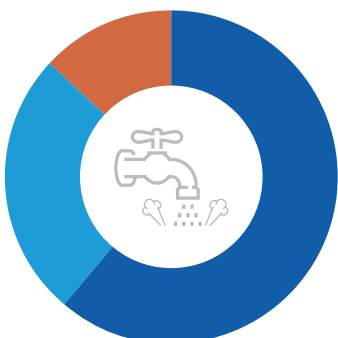
How many people share the bathroom?

1-5	10
5-10	8
10-20	2
20-30	2



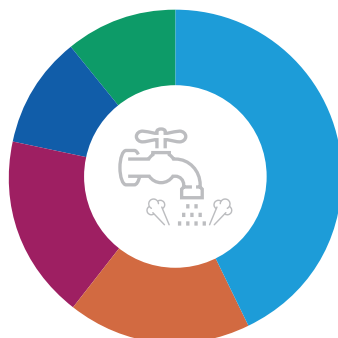
Can you access hot water?

Partially	19
Yes	8
No	4



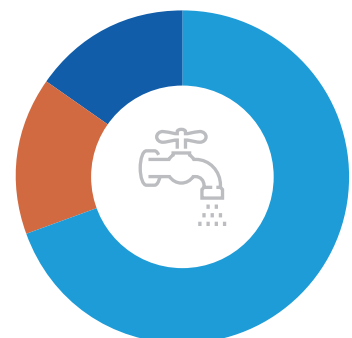
What problems does the prisoner have in accessing hot water?

Provision for limited time	12
Other	5
Not hot enough	5
Low flow	3
Provision on certain days	3



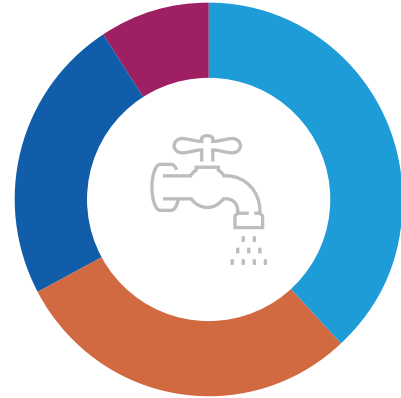
Is there a problem in accessing water?

Yes	41
No	9
Partially	9



Problems accessing water

Other	21
Shortage	16
Unhealthy	13
Too chlorinated	5



4.4. Food

Heightened risks faced by people held in closed institutions such as prisons, compared to those living outside has made adequate nutrition particularly important. All prisoners have the right to access sufficient, balanced and healthy food. The procedures and principles concerning the food in prisons and the calculation of daily rations are carried out according to the Regulation on the Food of Sentenced Prisoners, Prisoners on Remand, and Penal Institution Staff.²¹

The food allowance price for prisoners has been increased from 50 TL to 83 TL in 2024, and from 75 TL to 150 TL for juveniles, both sentenced and prisoners on remand, children staying with their mothers, and breastfeeding sentences, prisoners on remand, and pregnant women.²²

Prisoners expressed that the three meals given by the prison were not sufficient to meet their needs and that this amount was reduced to two meals a day or that the three courses given at meals were reduced to two during certain periods. Failure to increase the amount of food despite the above-mentioned food inflation has led to a decrease in the amount of meat and vegetables in portions and an increase in the amount of carbohydrate-heavy meals. Prisoners stated that although they could access food by paying for it through canteens, they could not take supplements such as vitamins that would strengthen their immunity. It was not possible to constantly access the products bought from the internal canteen since the prices of these products were not affordable for the prisoners.

Another problem faced by prisoners with health conditions is the lack of access to food suitable for their dietary needs. The problems with general meals have made the situation of prisoners with special nutritional needs even more chronic. Diet food is often not provided, and prisons which do provide diet food only do so with a single type without taking into account different diseases.

Complaints concerning food

Other	41
Unhygienic	56
Poor quality	57
Too little	51
Unhealthy	71

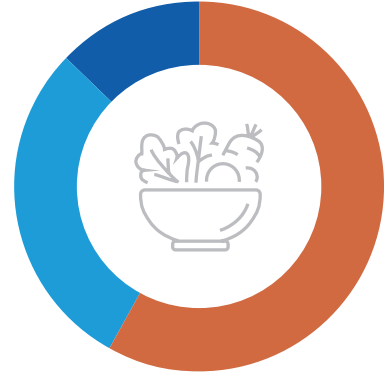


²¹ General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Houses, (2005). <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/mevzuat?MevzuatNo=9568&MevzuatTur=7&MevzuatTertip=5>. Access Date: 08.22.2025.

²² Adalet TV, (2024). Daily meal costs for prisoners and prison staff have been determined. <https://www.adalet.tv/haber/cezaevinde-yatan-mahkumlarin-ve-gorevli-memurlarin-gunluk-yemek-ucretleri-belli-oldu-58612.html>. Access Date: 09.09.2025.

Can they access food suitable for their diet?

No	32
Partially	16
Yes	7

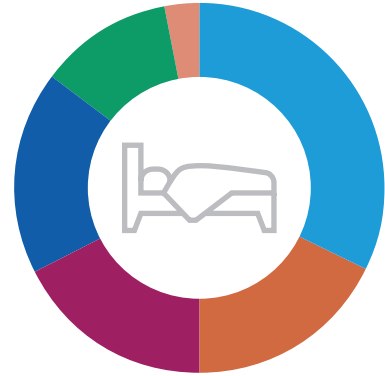


4.5. Mattresses-Pillow

The insufficient number of beds and pillows, worn out and unsuitable for health, and the failure to change them at regular intervals with the necessary hygiene measures have caused problems. The scabies epidemic, which has been seen in prisons in some periods, has directly affected prison conditions this year as well.

Issues related to the use of bedlinen/bedding

Insufficient	11
Old	6
Unsuitable for health	6
New items not provided	6
Dirty	4
Other	1



5. RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

5.1. Violations of the Right to Life

According to information we received from media reports, other CSOs, bar associations, and relatives of prisoners, at least 56 prisoners lost their lives in 2024. According to parliamentary records, the Ministry of Justice stated that 2,258 prisoners lost their lives in prisons between 2018 and 2023.²³ Additionally, parliamentary records indicate that 1,026 prisoners lost their lives in prison between July 24, 2023, and December 20, 2024.²⁴ Furthermore, it was stated that as of November 28, 2024, the number of prisoners on remand and sentences who lost their lives in penal institutions was 709.²⁵ In response to question no. 7/20764 submitted to the Ministry of Justice, it was reported that a total of 818 prisoners lost their lives in 2024.²⁶ These figures show an increase in the number of prisoners who died in prisons in 2024, as compared to previous years. Among the prisoners who lost their lives were those whose stay in prison was not suitable due to their illnesses and who therefore applied to the Forensic Medicine Institution (FMI) for the postponement of the execution of their sentences.

²³ Grand National Assembly of Türkiye Planning and Budget Commission Minutes Journal, (2024). <https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/Tutanaklar/TutanakGoster/4050>

²⁴ Journal of the Joint Commission of the Petition Commission and the Human Rights Investigation Commission of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye, (2025). Sub-commission reports: Discussion on the 2024 annual report of the Public Oversight Institution prepared by the sub-commission of the joint commission consisting of members of the Petition Commission and the Human Rights Investigation Commission. <https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/Tutanaklar/TutanakGoster/4219>

²⁵ Grand National Assembly of Türkiye Minutes Journal, (2024).

<https://cdn.tbmm.gov.tr/TbmmWeb/Tutanak/28/3/30/Tam/1d3c1b8b-7ac3-426f-aad4-d6b7a5b2eeca.pdf>

²⁶ Ministry of Justice, (2025). Response to the parliamentary question regarding prisoners who lost their lives in correctional facilities in 2024.

<https://cdn.tbmm.gov.tr/KKBSPublicFile/D28/Y3/T7/WebOnergeMetni/d58ae8b7-40af-41a0-8a01-8e7b71dcde3d.pdf>

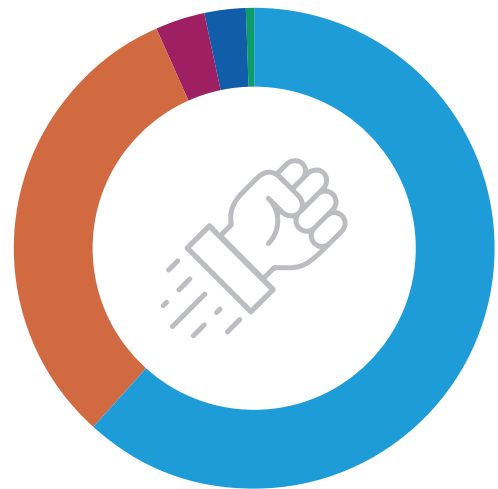
5.2. Torture And Ill-Treatment

An increase in ill-treatment, psychological pressure, and verbal and physical violence in prisons was also among the complaints conveyed in 2024. Inconclusive investigations against custodial officers or findings of no violation of rights in response to these applications have paved the way for the frequent use of physical, verbal and psychological violence.

CISST received a total of 257 complaints regarding torture and ill-treatment in 2024.

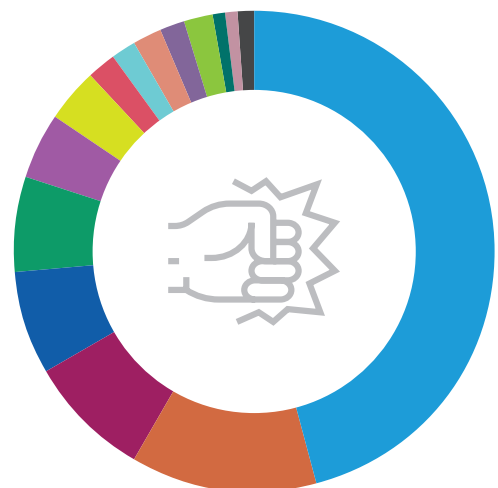
Type of violence inflicted

Verbal and Psychological	179
Physical	92
Other	10
Sexual	8
Economic	1



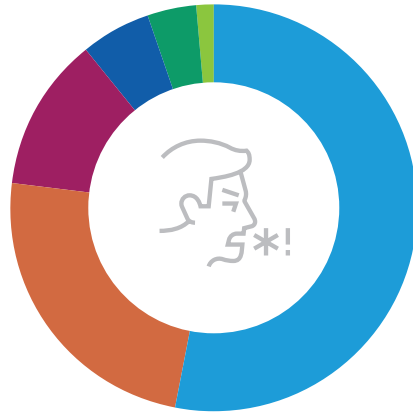
Type of physical violence

Beating	51
Other	14
Rear handcuffs	9
Beating with an instrument	8
Dragging on the ground	7
Hitting one point of the body	5
Injuring with a cutting object	4
Pressurized cold water	2
Bastinado	2
Keeping in the cold	2
Tight handcuffs	2
Not allowing to sleep	2
Keeping standing	1
Keeping on concrete floor	1
Rear handcuffs to hands and feet	1



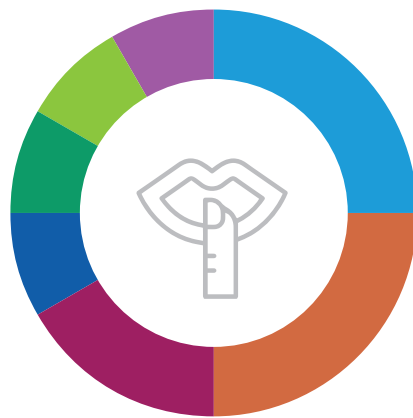
Type of verbal and psychological violence

Insults and humiliation	84
Other threats	38
Other	19
Encouraged to commit suicide	9
Threat of murder or injury	6
Threats to relatives	2



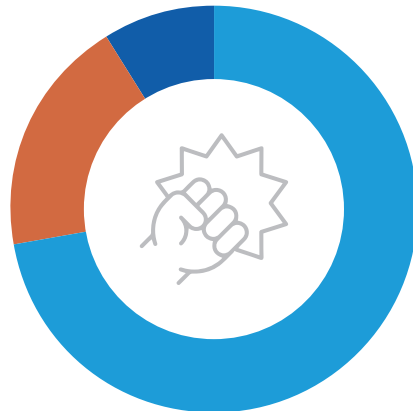
Type of sexual violence

Other	3
Harassment	3
Sexually explicit profanity and insults	2
Exposure of genitalia	1
Peeping	1
Female prison officers conducting strip searches	1
Rape	1



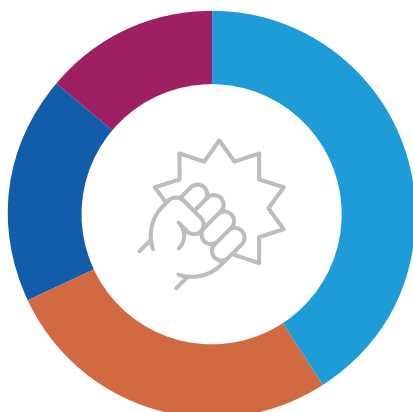
Who is the violence directed at?

To a person	149
To a group	39
To the room	18



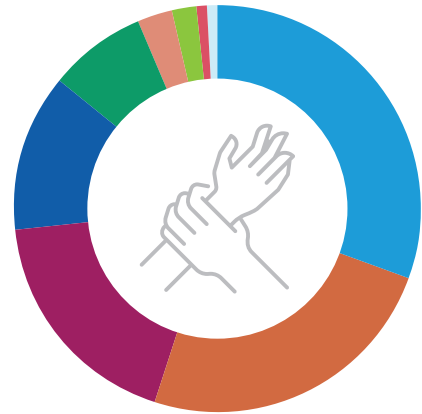
What happened after the violence

Could not obtain a medical report due to lack of referral	9
Received an assault report	6
The doctor did not issue an assault report	4
Could not obtain an assault report because the referral was made too late	3



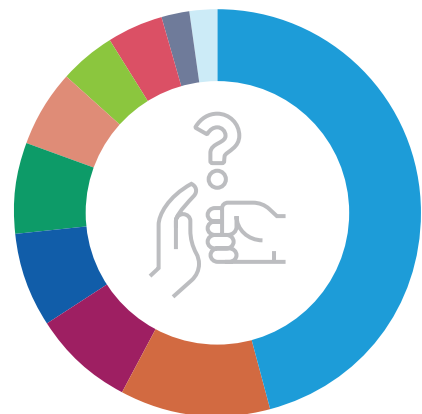
Couse of violence

Other	44
Political opinion	35
Type of crime	26
LGBTI+	18
Ethnicity	11
Women	4
Religious background difference	3
Disability	1
Foreign	1



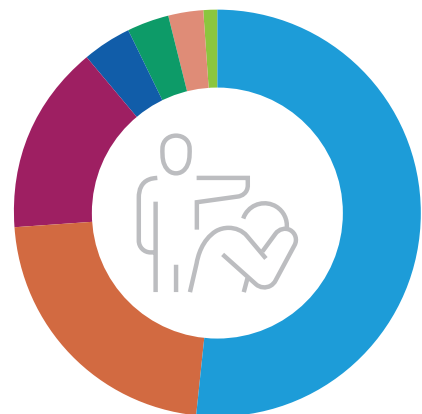
Where did the violence occur?

Ward	62
Administrative section	16
Corridor	11
Other	10
Hospital	10
Prison yard	8
Blind spot not covered by cameras	6
Infirmary	6
Shuttle vehicles	3
Padded Room	3



Who is committing the violence?

Prison officer	147
Administration	63
Prisoners	43
Medical staff	11
Prisoners directed by the administration	9
Gendarmerie	8
Other	3



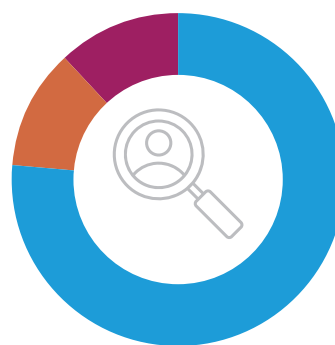
5.2.1. Strip Search

Although Article 34 of the Regulation on the Administration of Penal Institutions and Execution of Sentences and Security Measures²⁷ defines the conditions under which strip search can be conducted, it was observed that this practice continued arbitrarily in 2023 and there were complaints about the physical and psychological violence that followed. The complaints conveyed to CISST in 2024 include reports that prisoners were subjected to strip searches upon entering prison and that those who refused were beaten.

The UN Committee Against Torture stated in its Concluding Observations on Türkiye’s Fifth Periodic Report that such a practice can be carried out “only when absolutely necessary and when there is a reasonable suspicion of wrongdoing and that the criteria of necessity, reasonableness and proportionality are met.”²⁸

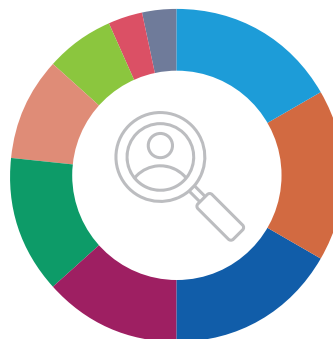
When did it occur?

■ Upon entering prison	13
■ During the search	2
■ After transfer	2



What kind of problems did you encounter?

■ Other	5
■ Disproportionate or arbitrary application	5
■ Violence due to refusal to undergo strip search	5
■ Conducting the search in violation of regulations	4
■ No reasonable suspicion was established	4
■ Physical intervention during the search	3
■ Verbal derogatory remarks during the search	2
■ Inappropriateness of the area searched	1
■ Subjected to sexual harassment	1



5.2.2. Disciplinary Sanctions

During 2024, the use of disciplinary sanctions continued as a secondary method for arbitrary punishment against prisoners. Prisoners could not report rights violations since they were threatened with disciplinary sanctions, and prisoners who applied to CISST wanted to keep their identities confidential and to make their complaints anonymously.

In 2024, CISST received a total of 156 complaints regarding disciplinary sanctions. It was expressed that the custodial officers threatened the prisoners with disciplinary sanctions, and those in open prisons were threatened with transfer to closed prisons when they wanted to convey the problems they experienced.

²⁷ <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/215.2324.pdf>. Access Date: 09/22/2025

²⁸ Human Rights Foundation of Turkey, (2024). Alternative Report Submitted to the United Nations Committee Against Torture on Türkiye’s Fifth Periodic Report and the United Nations Committee Against Torture’s Concluding Observations on Türkiye’s Fifth Periodic Report (CAT/C/TUR/CO/5). <https://tihv.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/TIHV-Iskenceye-Karsi-Komite-Alternatif-Raporu-ve-Komitenin-Sonuc-Gozlemleri.pdf>

Given any disciplinary sanction

Yes	133
No	1



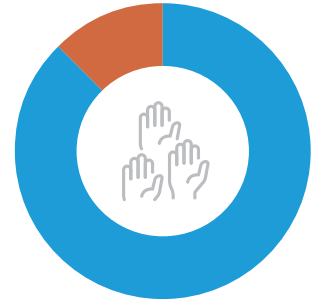
Are disciplinary sanctions applied arbitrarily?

Yes	56
No	-



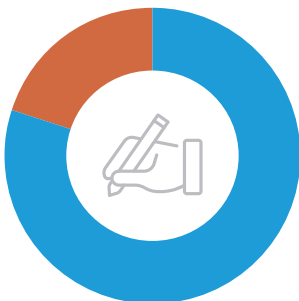
Can they use appeal mechanisms against disciplinary sanction?

Yes	21
No	3



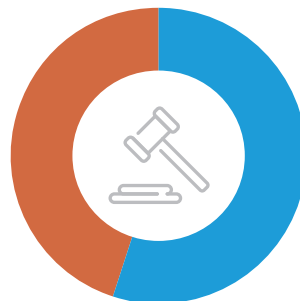
Are you being threatened with disciplinary sanction?

Yes	24
No	6



Has disciplinary action affected the length of the sentence?

Yes	11
No	9



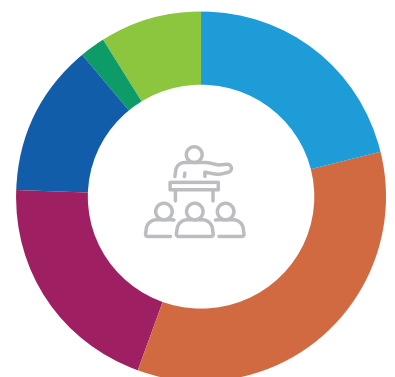
Has disciplinary action affected their good behavior?

Yes	40
No	-



What is the disciplinary sanction?

Imprisonment for 1-10 days	19
Placed in the cell for 11-20 days	31
Preventing participation in certain activities	18
Deprivation or restriction of communication and communication tools	12
Reprimand	2
Deprivation of visitation rights	8



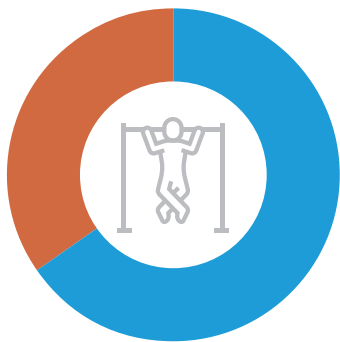
5.2.3. Isolation

The majority of prisoners in Türkiye cannot participate in any activity other than very limited sports activities. Although the normalization process began in 2022, as the measures and practices that increase isolation, which were introduced with the pandemic, became permanent, it was expressed by the prisoners that no social activity was carried out in prisons in 2024 too. We observed that isolation practices became systematic and widespread, especially with the increase in the number of high-security and S and Y Type prisons.

CISST received 345 applications regarding isolation in 2024. Many of these applications were made from Type S and high-security prisons.

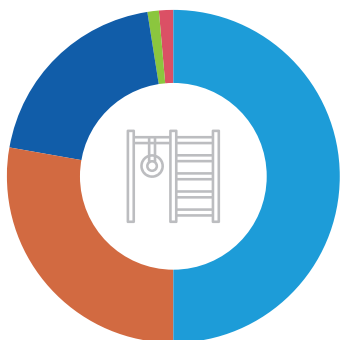
Are prisoners being taken to outdoor sports?

Yes	98
No	52



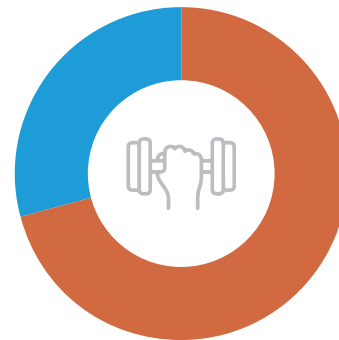
How often are they taken out for outdoor sports?

5-1 hours per month	41
5-1 hours per week	23
Less	16
10 hours per month	1
10-5 hours per month	1



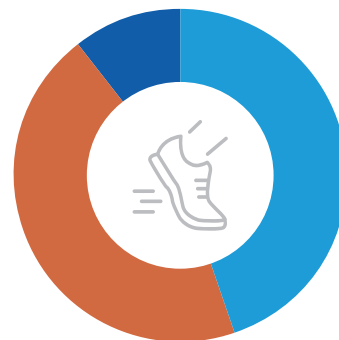
Are they being taken to indoor sports?

No	78
Yes	32



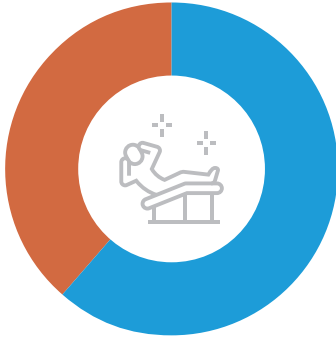
Why aren't they included in outdoor sports?

Aggravated Life Sentence	17
LGBTİ	17
Other	5



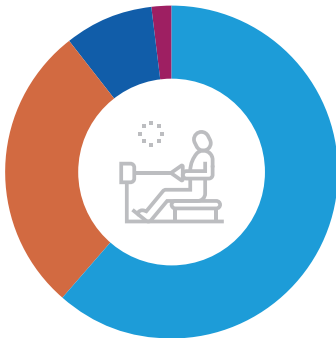
How often are they taken out for indoor sports?

5-1 hours per month	16
Less	10



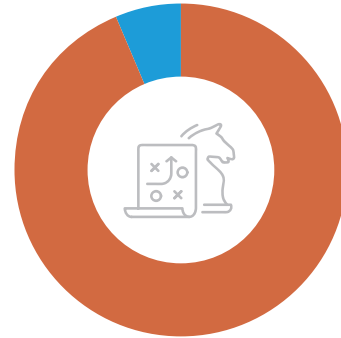
Why aren't they included in indoor sports?

Aggravated Life Sentence	35
LGBTI	16
Other	5
Women	1



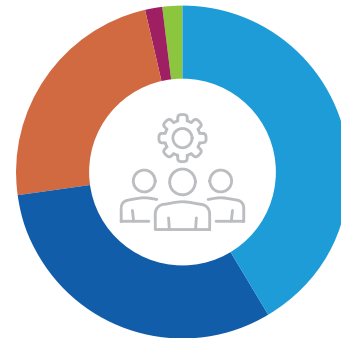
Can they attend workshops and courses?

No	166
Yes	11



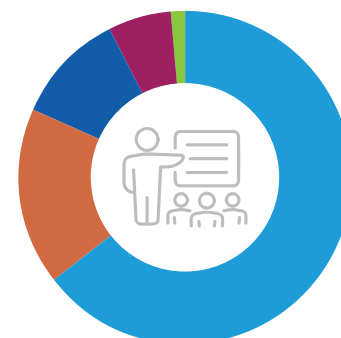
Why can't they attend workshops and courses?

Aggravated Life Sentence	46
Other	35
LGBTI	26
Women	2
Child	2



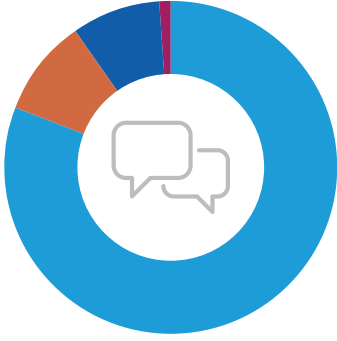
What problems does prisoner experience with workshops and courses?

Not opened	53
Other	14
The desired one is not opened	9
Insufficient materials	5
Un productive	1



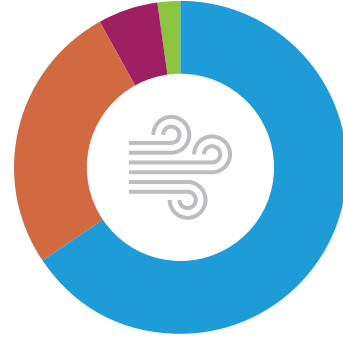
Issues with conversation

Not permitted	76
Permitted with the people in their ward	9
Other	8
Not permitted with the people they want	1



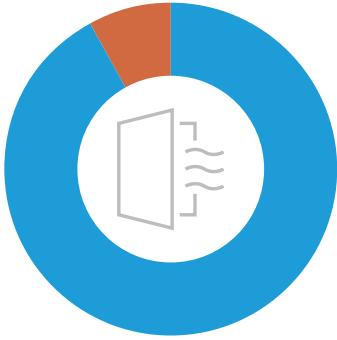
Kaç saat havalandırmaya çıkarılıyor?

1	67
2	27
5+	6
4	2



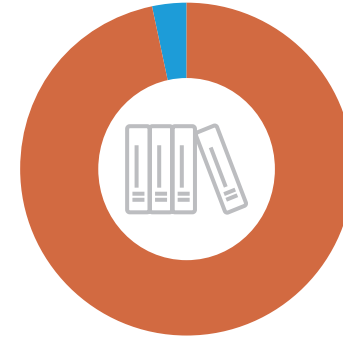
Is the prisoner taken out to the ventilated?

Evet	127
Hayır	11



Is the prisoner taken to the library?

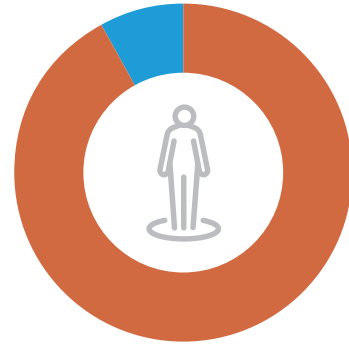
No	92
Yes	3



Although Law No. 5275 provides that aggravated life prisoners are to be held in single rooms, it was observed that other prisoners were also held alone in single cells. In particular, solitary confinement exceeding 15 days stands out as a practice contrary to international human rights standards. Prisoners reported that they faced solitary confinement without legal basis, an administrative decision and without notification. These findings point to a lack of supervision and that the national prevention mechanism should fulfill its function. The lack of legal basis for the practice and its application to certain groups creates an environment prone to human rights violations. In particular, long-term confinements and lack of psychological and social support mechanisms may adversely affect prisoners' physical and mental health.

Solitary confinement

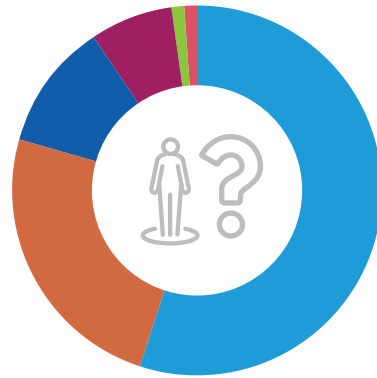
■ No	211
■ Yes	18



Allegation of rights violation in solitary confinement	Vaka Sayısı
Solitary confinement exceeding 15 days	53
Confinement due to discrimination	36
Limitation of communication with the outside world in practices other than disciplinary punishment	19
Ventilation area time is less than other prisoners in confinements other than disciplinary action	16
Other	10
Not being examined by a psychologist and physician in the process of being locked in a single room	5
Inadequate or poor quality nutrition	3
Less than 1 hour of ventilation time during disciplinary punishment	1
Inability to access a medical report	1

What is the reason for being kept in a single cell?

■ Aggravated life imprisonment	102
■ LGBTİ	45
■ Political prisoners	21
■ Other	13
■ Psychological problems	2
■ Health issues	2



Type of solitary confinement	Vaka Sayısı
Solitary confinement with no legal basis, no basis for administrative decision or no notification of decision	60
Solitary confinement due to disciplinary action	10
Solitary confinement for observation during the execution process	10
Other	8
Solitary confinement for observation at the entrance to the institution	3
Solitary confinement in a padded room	2

5.3. ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE

Healthcare must be provided free of charge, without discrimination, regardless of legal status, and prisoners must be informed about their treatment processes. Overcrowding in prisons, inadequate conditions, limited hygiene services, problems with access to food cannot be considered separately from health problems. Health must be considered as the combination of physical and mental health beyond the protection of physical integrity and function, and a holistic approach to health must be adopted.

Detention conditions and access to healthcare must be governed by the principle of equality and apply to all prisoners. Despite this in 2024, a rehabilitation type prison for prisoners with substance addiction issues was established in the Adana Suluca Penal Institutions Campus; 107 prisoners were transferred there.²⁹ R-type prisons are institutions that are discriminatory, restrict social support, and are incompatible with community-based health services, in addition to being segregationist and contrary to the principle of equality. This prison, opened for prisoners with substance addiction issues, is established as a center where social support is eliminated and isolation is intense, similar to other R-type prisons.

CISST received numerous complaints in 2024 regarding access to healthcare, hospital referrals, infirmaries, and the indifference of doctors in hospitals.

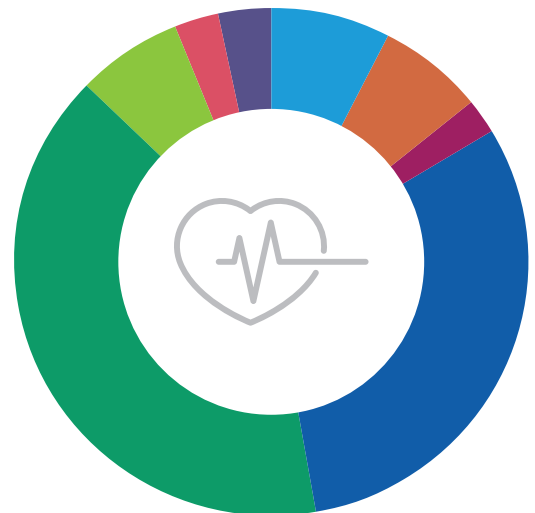
Can they receive regular treatment?

No	429
Yes	1



Why can't they receive regular treatment?

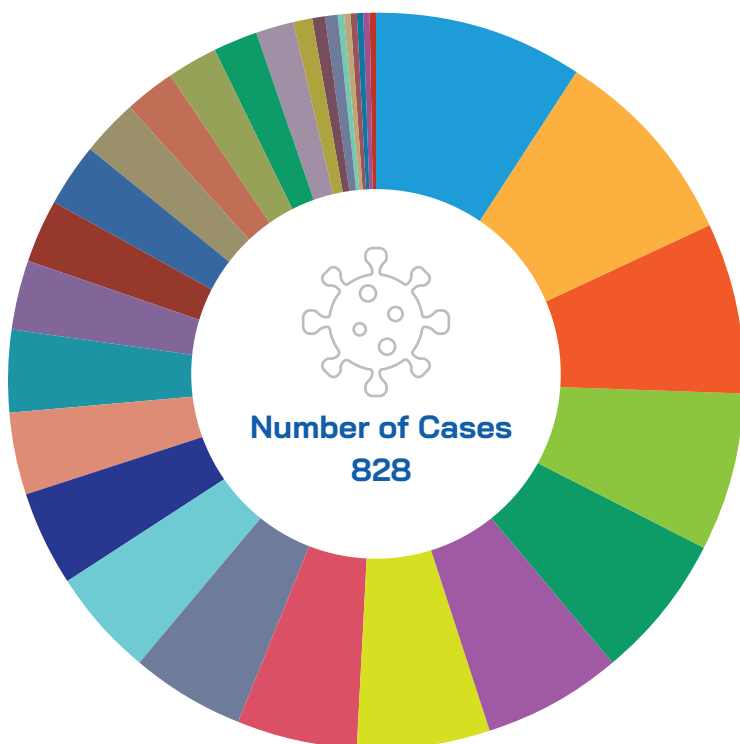
Other	45
The doctor in hospital is not paying attention	38
Medical staff not paying attention in the hospital	12
Late referral hospital	180
Not transferred to hospital	231
Problems in infirmary	38
Tests are not performed	16
Only one of multiple disease is treated	19



²⁹ Ministry of Justice, (2025). 2024 Activity Report. <https://rayp.adalet.gov.tr/resimler/1/dosya/adalet-bakanligi-2024-yili-faaliyet-raporu12-03-20254-50-pm.pdf>

Types of diseases?	Number of Cases	%
Internal Diseases	76	9,2
Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation	75	9,1
Chest Diseases	61	7,4
Orthopedics and Traumatology	57	6,9
Neurology	52	6,3
Cardiovascular Surgery	51	6,2
Cardiology	50	6,0
Psychiatry	43	5,2
Gastroenterology	41	5,0
Otorhinolaryngology	40	4,8
General Surgery	33	4,0
Neurosurgery	31	3,7
Oncology	29	3,5
Ophthalmology	25	3,0
Oral and Dental Health	24	2,9
Psychology	23	2,8

Types of diseases?	Number of Cases	%
Urology	21	2,5
Infectious Diseases	19	2,3
Nutrition and Diet	18	2,2
Nephrology	16	1,9
Dermatology and Venereal Diseases	14	1,7
Endocrinology and Metabolism	7	0,8
Allergy Diseases	5	0,6
Geriatrics	3	0,4
Hematology	3	0,4
Algology	2	0,2
Bone Density Measurement	2	0,2
Audiology	2	0,2
Other	2	0,2
Gynecology and Obstetrics	2	0,2
Traditional and Complementary Medicine (Getamer)	1	0,1



5.3.1. Primary Healthcare Services

In this section, the problems faced by prisoners while accessing Primary Health Care Services will be conveyed regardless of the content of the services.³⁰

5.3.1.1. Infirmary

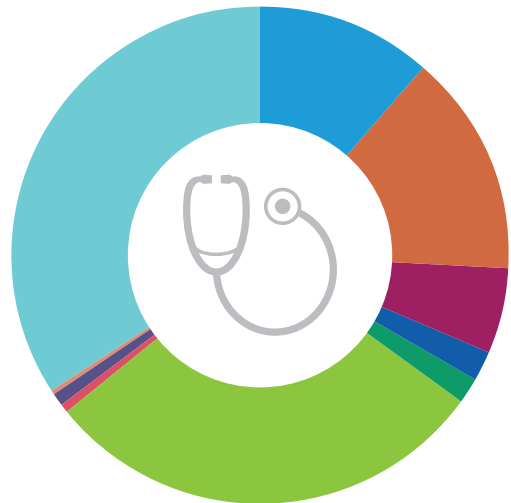
The process of accessing the infirmary doctor in prisons is based on petitions submitted to the custodial officers. Both the processing of petitions and timing of the infirmary visits are, to some extent, left to the discretion of the custodial officers. This system may lead to confrontations between the prisoners and custodial officers and, in some cases, result in exposure to discrimination and difficulties in accessing their right to health.

In its response to a parliamentary question dated August 15, 2024, the Ministry of Justice reported that 3,115,834 infirmary examinations were conducted in 2023, while the number of hospital referrals was 1,050,879.³¹ In addition, the minutes of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (TBMM) indicate that in 2024, the number of infirmary examinations was 3,986,000, and the number of prisoners referred to hospitals was 1,476,000.³²

In addition to physical examinations, prisoners can consult with doctors online via the e-doctor application. The e-doctor application has been piloted in 9 prisons, and as of June 12, 2024, 1,633 people have consulted with doctors online.³³ So far, the e-doctor application has been implemented in 15 prisons, with 4,547 examinations conducted in 2024.³⁴ Although this application is seen as a tool that can facilitate prisoners' access to healthcare, it should not be used as a substitute for face-to-face examinations and should not prevent prisoners from accessing equal, continuous, and quality healthcare services.

Problems in the infirmary

Other	33
The doctor not paying attention	42
Ill-treatment by the doctor	16
Visits are too short	5
No information is given about the diseases	5
Hospital referrals are not made	84
IKM interfering with the examination	2
IKMs are present in the room	2
Reports are not given	1
Delayed permission to visit the infirmary	98



³⁰ For detailed information on primary healthcare services, see: <https://cisst.org.tr/raporlar/yillik-rapor-2020/> Access Date: 09/27/2025.

³¹ Ministry of Justice Legislation Directorate General, (2024). Written question proposal. <https://cdn.tbmm.gov.tr/KKBSPublicFile/D28/Y2/T7/WebOnergeMetni/1681d9b8-afd1-4a1e-b77b-f0201525a42f.pdf>

³² Grand National Assembly of Türkiye Proceedings Journal, (2025). 101st session. <https://cdn.tbmm.gov.tr/TbmmWeb/Tutanak/28/3/101/Tam/325644f1-b438-4617-a23c-4f13d1c71d90.html>

³³ Grand National Assembly of Türkiye Human Rights Investigation Commission Proceedings Journal, (2024). <https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/Tutanaklar/TutanakGoster/3279>

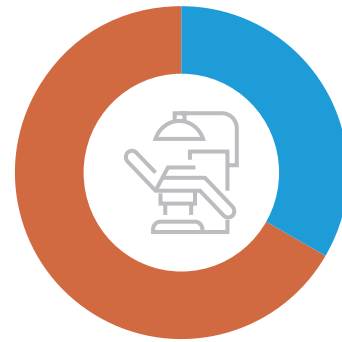
³⁴ Ministry of Justice, (2025). 2024 Activity Report. <https://rayp.adalet.gov.tr/resimler/1/dosya/adalet-bakanligi-2024-yili-faaliyet-raporu12-03-20254-50-pm.pdf>

5.3.1.2. Dental Unit

All prisons must have dental units, but prisoners report that some prisons do not. It is also known that the technical infrastructure of existing dental units is generally inadequate. It has been observed that even simple procedures such as tooth extractions or fillings cannot be performed in dental units and patients are referred to the hospital for basic dental issues. For such transfers, it is first necessary to be examined by the dentist in the prison. However, the number of dentists on the permanent staff in prisons is often insufficient in proportion to the prison population. Thus, they are supported by short-term visits from outside dentists. However, this practice is also insufficient to meet the needs of the prison population, and therefore the time it takes for a prisoner to be examined may be prolonged. Consequently, the process of transfer to a dental hospital after the examination is also delayed.

Dental unit Available?

Yes	6
No	12



What Kind of Problems are Experienced at the Dental Unit?

Inadequate materials	3
Other	1
Tooth extraction not carried out	1
Dentist not available	1
Tooth filling not carried out	1
Implant not carried out	1



5.3.1.3. Psychosocial Services

Imprisonment has negatively affected the mental health of prisoners. Since the number of psychologists and social workers in the prisons is inadequate in proportion to the prison population, reports indicate prisoners cannot adequately use the psychosocial services unit.

Within the scope of the Integration of Smart Technologies Integration Project for Penal Institutions (ACEP) project, 3,634 prisoners received online psychosocial support services from psychologists and social workers between the project's start date and September 10, 2024.³⁵ While this application and the number of prisoners benefiting from it demonstrate the need for mental health support, it also reveals that this need is not yet being met equitably and effectively, considering the structural conditions in prisons, limited digital access, and the insufficient number of psychologists and social workers. Furthermore, online applications may lead to less communication with others and less contact with the outside world for prisoners, potentially creating negative psychological effects for them.

³⁵ Ministry of Justice, (2024). General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Houses received the excellence award for the second time. <https://www.adalet.gov.tr/ceza-ve-tevkifevleri-genel-mudurlugu-2-kez-mukemmeliyet-odulu-aldi>

Problems in psychosocial services

No attention paid	10
Not transferred	10
Not permitted regularly	9
Rarely permitted	8
Other	4
Maltreatment by an official	2
Interviewer not competent enough	2
Visits are too short	1



5.3.2. Second and Tertiary Healthcare Services

In 2024, many complaints were submitted by the prisoners about the hospital transfers and processes. The prisoners complained that the transfers were made with delays or were not made at all, and the complaints regarding the shuttle vehicles continued.

5.3.2.1. Shuttle Vehicles

The complaints about the shuttle vehicles, which are used for the transfer of prisoners to hospitals, including that the ventilation does not work, that the vehicles are too hot in summer and too cold in the winter, that they were unventilated and smelled bad, also continued in 2024. It was reported to us that they were kept waiting in these shuttle vehicles under these conditions by 51 prisoners in 2024.

5.3.2.2. Problems Experienced at Hospital

The prisoners with persistent diseases reported that they were not followed up by the same doctor when they went to the hospital for regular examinations, and that this adversely affected the treatment process. Prisoners state that oral searches before hospital transfers has become standard practice in some prisons, that the searches are conducted in a way that violates human dignity, and that they had difficulties accessing treatment because of this imposition. Articles 51 and 52 of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Nelson Mandela Rules) state that body searches shall not be used to unnecessarily intrude upon a prisoner’s privacy and shall be undertaken only if absolutely necessary. In the World Medical Association’s statement on body searches, it was expressed that the searches shall only be done by persons with appropriate training.

In general, complaints in 2024 persisted regarding delays in hospital transfers; inability to visit the infirmary, not being taken to surgery or postponement of the date of surgery, not being provided with necessary medication regularly, not having their medical reports renewed, not being able to get sufficient information about their illnesses, not being able to get the results of tests and reports, and examinations in handcuffs.

Problems experienced during the hospital process?

Discrimination	12
Other	12
Ill-treatment by a doctor	11
Indifference	10
The gendarmerie attending the examination	10
Waiting in handcuffs	10
The gendarmerie's intervention to doctor's work	8
Waiting too long	7
Waiting in the shuttle	5
Custodial officer's intervention to doctor's work	3
Custodial officer attending the examination	3
Incorrect treatment	3
Incorrect diagnosis	3
Ill-treated by healthcare professionals	2
Short visits	2



5.3.2.3. Oral and Dental Health Services

Prisoners complained that prisoners with oral and dental health issues had difficulties accessing treatment, especially that the treatment of prisoners with tooth loss had been disrupted and that their problems were not solved. Due to the unavailability of sufficient supplies and equipment (for example, x-ray devices) in dental units in prisons, prisoners suffering from oral and dental health problems are mostly referred to hospitals. Unfortunately, oral health in prisons is a prominent problem that is often ignored. These lead to the impression that the importance of oral health, a component of basic healthcare, is ignored.

Many basic dental procedures cannot be carried out in the dental outpatient clinics of public hospitals, making it difficult for prisoners to access dental health. Specialized dental treatments such as implants stand out as a severe problem among prisoners.

Dental services are also provided in prisons under the heading of outsourced services. However, access to these services is generally limited, and prisoners are expected to get dental treatment through their own means. This is far from a just solution for the general prison population and increases the inequalities in health. Thus, a more inclusive and accessible approach to oral health services in prisons must be adopted.

5.4. Communication With The Outside World

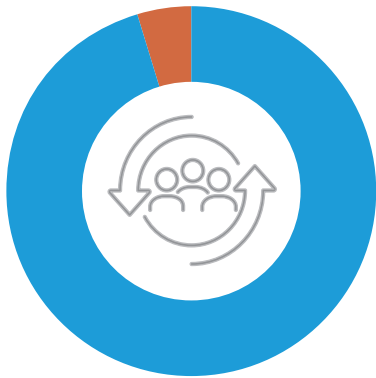
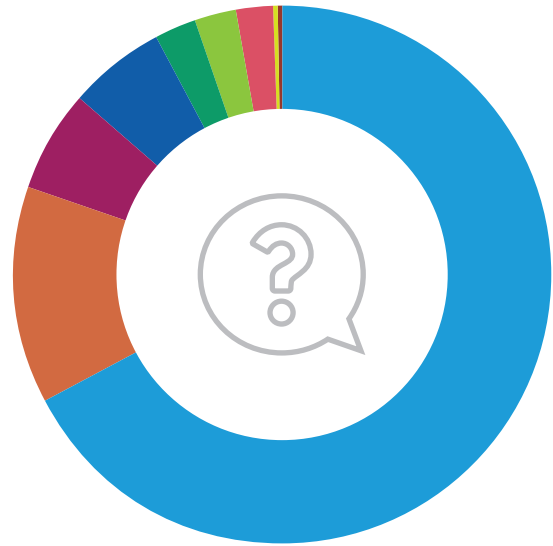
5.4.1. Issues Related to Transfers Between Prisons

Between 2019 and 2023³⁶ it was noted that prisoners were held in prisons far from their families, therefore could not be visited and while forced transfer was used as a disciplinary tool, the transfer applications made by the prisoners with legitimate grounds were rejected. In 2024, the livelihood difficulties created by the economic crisis deeply affected the prisoners who are held far away from their families. As mentioned in the 2019 CISST annual report, forced transfers, which started from the state of emergency period onwards, became an instrument of ill-treatment and discrimination especially against Kurdish political prisoners, and continued to be implemented in 2024.

CISST received a total of 600 applications regarding transfers in 2024.

Why does the prisoner want to transfer?

Distance to Family	412
For Other Prisoners in the Family	79
Health	38
Other	35
Other Prisoners	16
Administration	15
Presence of foes	13
To be able to work	2
Distance to university	1



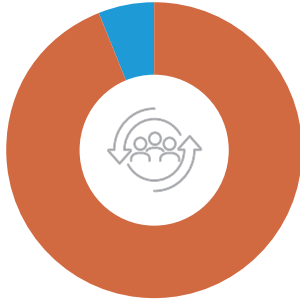
The result of the transfer request?

Rejected	107
Approved	5

³⁶ Demirbaş H. B, Sağlam D. (2020), Civil Society in Penal System Association Annual Report 2019. <https://cisst.org.tr/yillik-rapor-2019-tr/> Access Date: 11/24/2025.
 Demirbaş H. B, Sağlam D. (2021), Civil Society in Penal System Association Annual Report 2020. <https://cisst.org.tr/yillik-rapor-2020/> Accessed: 24.11.2025.
 CISST, (2022). CISST 2021 Prison Report. <https://cisst.org.tr/yillik-hapishaneler-raporu-2021/> Accessed on: 24.11.2025.
 CISST, (2023). CISST 2022 Prison Report. <https://cisst.org.tr/yillik-hapishaneler-raporu-2022/> Accessed on: 11/24/2025
 CISST, (2024). CISST 2023 Prison Report. <https://cisst.org.tr/kategori/yayinlar/> Accessed on: 11/24/2025

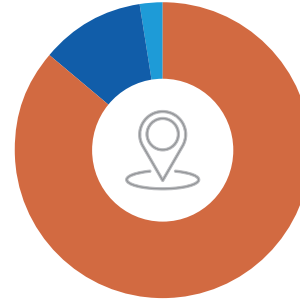
How was the prisoner transferred to current prison?

Forced Transfer	319
Voluntary	20



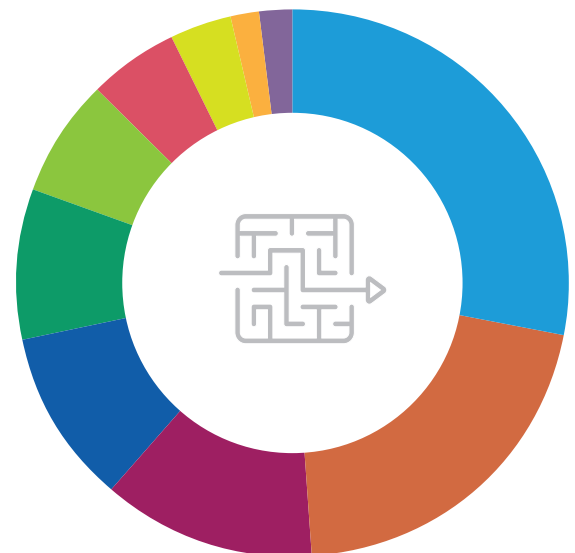
Is the prison where the prisoner is held close to the family?

No	152
Partially	20
Yes	4



Problem experienced during transfer?

Permission to take belongings not given	16
Confiscation of belongings at the place of arrival	12
Other	7
Put in isolation	6
Not giving timely information	5
Damage to belongings	4
Imposition of strip search	3
Violence during strip search	2
Mistreatment by the gendarmerie	1
Violence by gendarmerie	1



5.5. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Prisoners' rights based on freedom of expression were restricted in 2024. The restrictions imposed on means of communication with the outside world, such as letters and phones, combined with the increasing poverty of the prisoners, led to an increase in complaints regarding freedom of expression in 2024.

5.5.1. Restrictions on Visits and Phone

Prisoners' communication with the outside world decreased in 2024 due to reduced visitation times and economic difficulties. It was reported that prisoners requested transfers throughout 2024 to prisons close to their families, that they made applications for such requests but the transfers were rejected, that their families had difficulties attending visits due to economic conditions and that the visits only lasted 30-45 minutes when the family was able to visit.

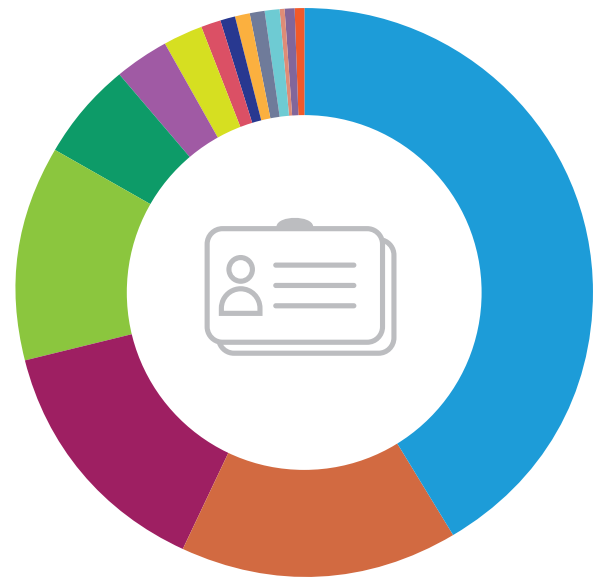
In addition, prisons have announced that prisoners can request a 30-minute visit, a 30-minute video call via ACEP, or a 10-minute phone call to compensate for visits that could not be held during the pandemic.³⁷ This decision was made in September 2024, and it is evident that the decisions made by the Constitutional Court in March 2024 regarding the prisoners' applications concerning the violation of their right to family life and the compensation ruling due to the non-realization of their visitation rights during the pandemic period were effective.³⁸

The "Parent-Child Visiting Room," which was launched as a pilot project in 2023 and is currently available in four prisons, has been established to ensure that children whose parents are in prison can visit them under appropriate conditions and in a suitable environment.³⁹

In addition to the right to voice telephone communication with their families, prisoners can also conduct video calls with their families for a certain fee and within a specified time frame through the e-visit application, which was piloted in 2020 at the Bakırköy Women's, Sincan Children's, and Youth Closed Penitentiary Institutions as part of the ACEP project.⁴⁰ The infrastructure for the ACEP application has been established in 165 prisons in 2024.⁴¹ In addition to video calls, this application aims to enable e-mail, e-count, e-petition, e-doctor, e-library, and canteen shopping.

Issues experienced by visitors related to visits

Cannot come often due to distance	340
Due to travel expenses	129
Elderly	115
Sick	102
Has to visit multiple people	45
Has young children	24
Other	20
Unsuitability of visiting hours	8
Limited of public transportation to the prison location	8
Cannot get permission from work	7
Local accommodation problem	6
Limited intercity transportation alternatives	6
Absence of public transportation to the prison location	4
Cannot get permission from school	4
Exposed to ill-treatment during searches	3



³⁷ <https://adanafcik.adalet.gov.tr/pandemi-doneminde-yapilamayan-ziyaretler>;
<https://kirsehirscik.adalet.gov.tr/pandemi-donemi-yaptirilamayan-goruslerin-telifisi-hakkinda>

³⁸ Constitutional Court, (2024). Murat Kılıç and others application. <https://kararlarbilgibankasi.anayasa.gov.tr/BB/2020/25564>

Constitutional Court, (2024). Süleyman Kurt Application. <https://kararlarbilgibankasi.anayasa.gov.tr/BB/2020/30704>

^{39,41} Ministry of Justice, (2025). 2024 activity report. <https://rayp.adalet.gov.tr/resimler/1/dosya/adalet-bakanligi-2024-yili-faaliyet-raporu12-03-20254-50-pm.pdf>

⁴⁰ General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Houses, (2021). Infrastructure Work Continues for Digital Transformation in Penal Institutions. <https://cte.adalet.gov.tr/Home/SayfaDetay/ceza-infaz-kurumlarinda-dijital-donusum-icin-altyapi-calismalari-devam-ediyor25102021031431>

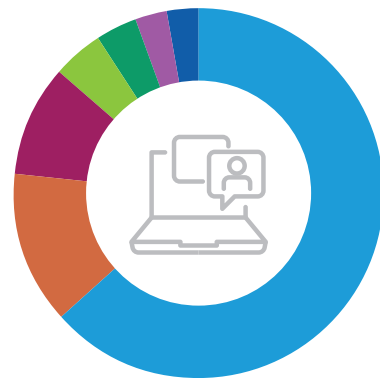
Can they benefit from the right to a video call?

No	112
Yes	1



Why can't they benefit?

Aggravated Life Sentence	71
Political Prisoner	15
Prison infrastructure deficiencies	11
Arbitrary obstruction	5
LGBTI+	4
Economic reasons	3
No kiosk in the ward	3



5.5.2. Restrictions on Correspondence

Letters are one of the most important tools that prisoners use to communicate with the outside world. Should this right be restricted or prevented, prisoners who can convey their complaints to non-governmental organizations through letters, lose their chance to voice their problems and the violations they experience. In 2024, prisoners stated that they could not send letters because postage fees were very expensive and they could not afford it most of the time.

Prisoners who wanted to convey their complaints through letters had their letters censored, letters sent by and to prisoners were confiscated without justification, their letters were lost, and Kurdish letters sent and received by prisoners were not delivered without justification or on the grounds that there was no interpreter.

Unable to send letters

Yes	70
-----	----



CISST ile mektuplaşma sorunları

■ CISST publications are not permitted	34
■ Cannot send letters to CISST	25
■ Cannot receive letters from CISST	11



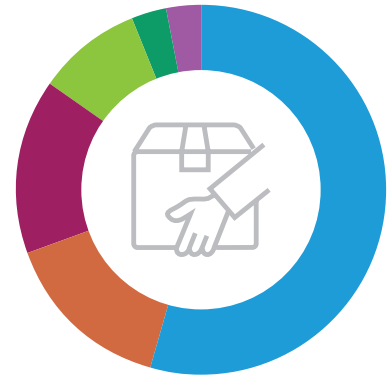
Reason for not being able to send letters?

■ Thinks they are unofficially confiscated	25
■ Other	21
■ No money	17
■ Confiscated by reading commission	14
■ Disciplinary punishment	3



Reason for not receiving cargo?

■ Other	18
■ Because the item is sold in the canteen	5
■ Due to the features of the clothes	5
■ Due to the colors of the clothes	3
■ Because they are from the same city	1
■ Because they are LGBTI+	1



5.5.3. Restrictions on Periodical and Non-periodical Publications

The initial condition for prisoners' access to periodical and non-periodical publications is that the publications have an ISBN-ISSN obtained from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Even if these numbers are obtained, in order for books to be accepted, they must not be subject to a recall or ban.⁴²

As mentioned in the annual report prepared by CISST in 2019, Article 62 of Law No. 5275⁴³, the phrase "endangering institutional security" grants the prison administration broad authority, and therefore, the practice of arbitrarily not allowing many books into prisons for these reasons, even though they have not been banned outside, continued in 2024.

⁴² <http://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/1.5.5275.pdf> Access Date: 27.09.2025

⁴³ <http://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/1.5.5275.pdf> Access Date: 27.09.2025

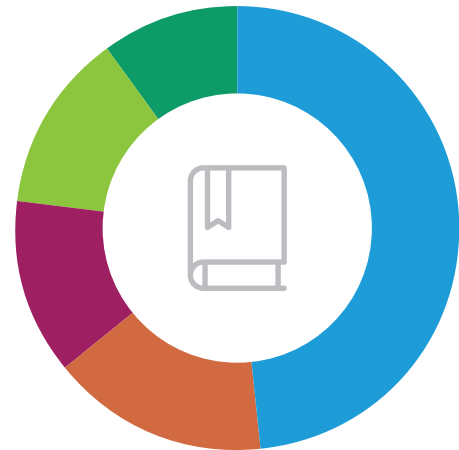
In 2024, many newspapers, books, and magazines, for which there was no confiscation decision, were not given to the prisoners despite their demands. Newspapers without the right to publish official announcements and advertisements through the Press Advertisement Institution were not admitted to the prisons. Prisoners could access magazines only if they subscribed to them and paid their fees.

There is book restriction

Yes 62

Scope of book restriction

Number limitation	34
Prohibition of content	11
The book is not permitted because it is in a foreign language	9
Not receiving books by mail	9
Other	7



There is newspaper restriction

Yes 26

Scope of newspaper restriction

Prohibition of content	17
Other	4



There is journal restriction

Yes 45

Scope of journal restriction

Prohibition of content	16
Not receiving magazines by mail	13
Other	10
Because it is in a foreign language.	5
Number limitation	2



5.5.4. Restrictions Radio and TV

It was reported that the radios the prisoners paid for were confiscated, access to AM frequencies was denied, and the right to get information was minimized in 2024 as well. Many TV channels that were not banned in Türkiye and could be considered mainstream channels were also excluded from the central broadcasting system in 2024, and prisoners were prevented from watching these channels.

Unable to access TV/Radio channels

Yes 35

5.5.5. Restrictions on Petition

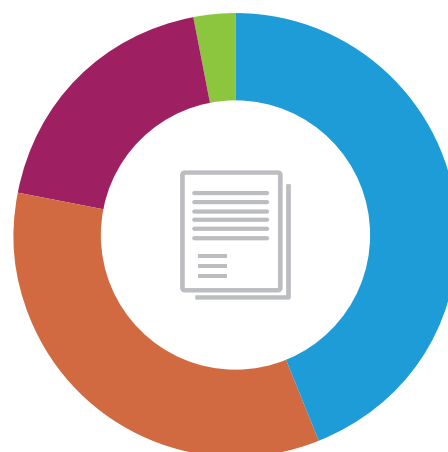
Prisoners inform the administrative authorities about their complaints and the violations they experience through petitions. The problems related to the processing of prisoners’ petitions by different institutions have been ongoing for a long time, and continued in 2024 as well. The numbers of the petitions written by the prisoners were not given to them, despite this being their right. Prisoners who could not follow up on the responses to their applications stated that they thought that their petitions were not processed. There were also allegations that the petitions were not processed at the discretion of the prison administration and that the petitions submitted were lost. This situation resulted in the inability to convey complaints. In addition, the prisoners were exposed to various retaliatory procedures and stated that they were threatened with disciplinary punishment due to the contents of the petitions they wrote. This process resulted in the prisoners being cautious about conveying their complaints and not being able to complain about most of the issues.

Cannot submit petitions

Yes 179

Problems with the petition

■ Thinks the petitions are not processed	107
■ No responses to petitions	83
■ Cannot get the petition number	46
■ Other	7



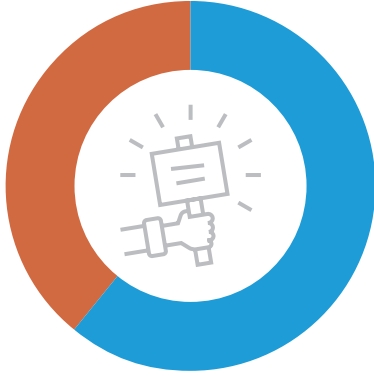
5.6. Hunger Strikes Against Rights Violations

Hunger strikes against ill-treatment, psychological pressure, verbal and physical violence and other violations of rights in prisons were also reported in 2024. The failure of investigations into rights violations such as restrictions on social activities, denial of visits, workshops, and conversations, the lack of findings of rights violations in the responses to these complaints, practices of types S, Y, and R, and the rejection of requests to be transferred to prisons closer to their families or friends have led prisoners to resort to hunger strikes. According to the Hunger Strike Monitoring and Follow-up Center Coordination Report, between November 2023 and April 2024, at least 1,997 prisoners in 91 prisons carried out rotating hunger strike actions .⁴⁴

⁴⁴ CISST, (2024). Hunger Strike Monitoring and Tracking Center Coordination Report. <https://cisst.org.tr/aclik-grevi-izleme-raporu-ortak-basin-aciklamasi/>

Why did the prisoners go on hunger strike?

Violation of rights	36
Political demands	23



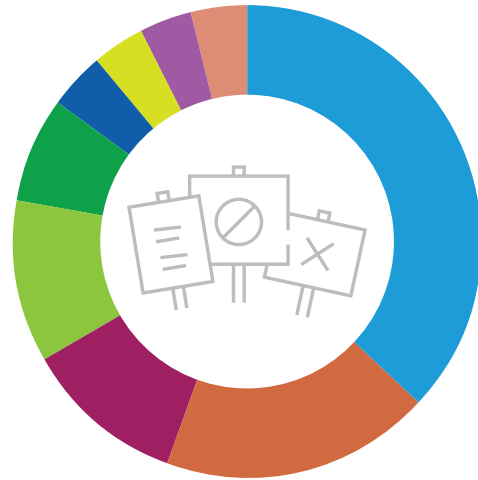
Açlık grevine nasıl girdi?

Tek başına	35
Grupla	27



Problems experienced in hunger strike

Disciplinary punishment	10
Vitamin/canteen requests are not being met	5
Torture and ill-treatment	3
Isolation	3
Communication ban	2
Requested to end hunger strike	1
Inability to consult with independent medical teams	1
Other	1
Cannot receive regular medical treatment	1



II. PRISONERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS



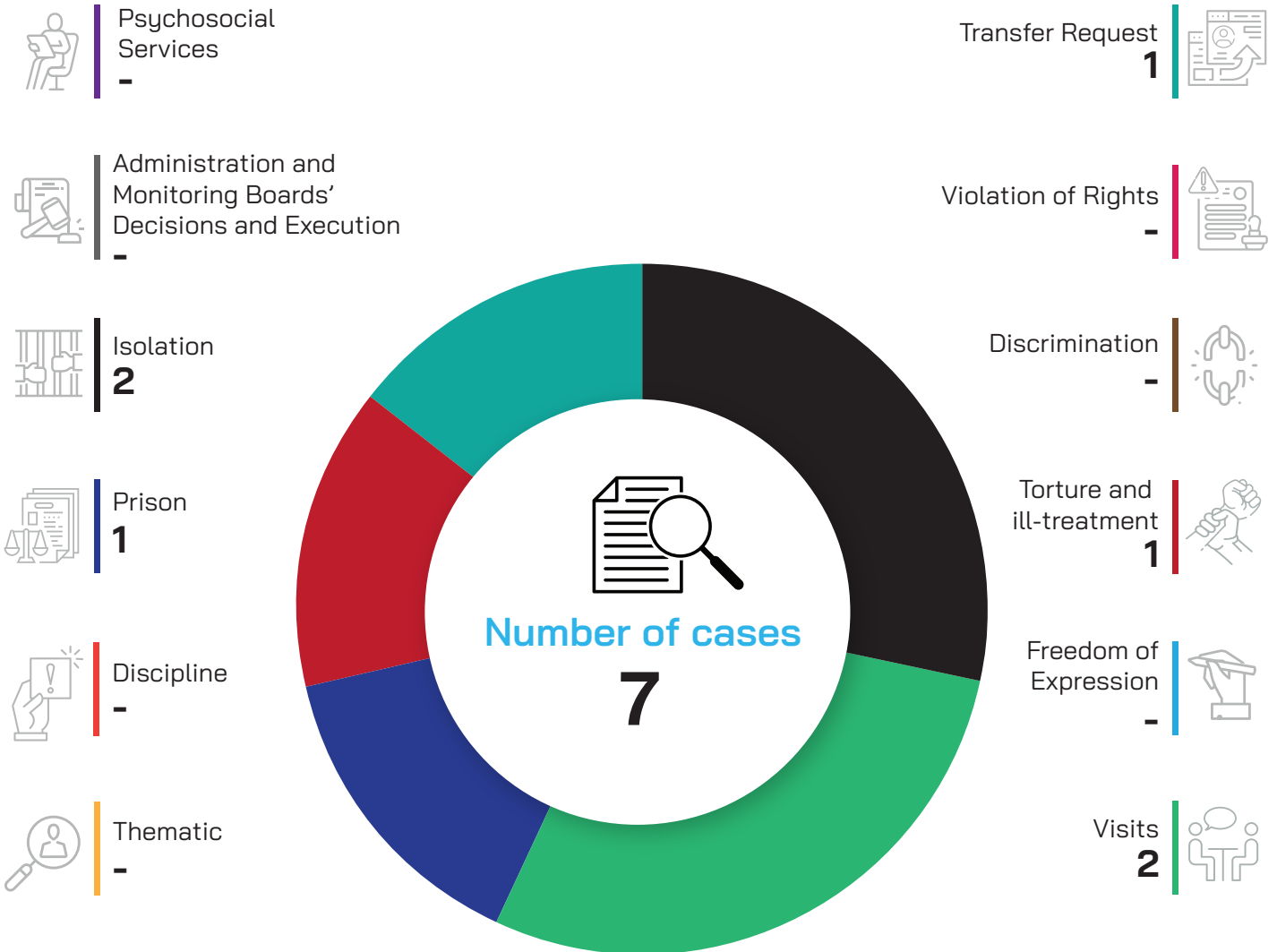
Children In Prison



Number of
prisoners
corresponded
with in 2024

26

Annual Thematic Area Case Statistics ⁴⁵



⁴⁵ The statistics include data on young prisoners who were incarcerated as children and reached adulthood in prison.

1. CHILDREN IN PRISON

1.1. Definition

Under Türkiye's criminal justice system, a child can be detained during trial or sentenced to imprisonment if accused of committing an act defined as a crime in the law. Children can be sent to prison from the minimum age of 12. Therefore, the term "juvenile prisoner" primarily refers to children between the ages of 12 and 18 who have committed or are alleged to have committed an act defined as a crime by law. However, children in prisons are not limited to this age group. Children between the ages of 0 and 6 who are imprisoned with their mothers due to their mothers' cases may also be considered juvenile prisoners in practice, even if not in procedural law. In addition to these two groups of children, young people who were imprisoned as children and reached the age of 18 while in prison are also part of research and studies on children in prison, as they are/may be affected by child sentencing regulations in terms of legislation. Young people who were arrested as children and continue their detention after the age of 18 pass to the gradual sentence execution system and conditions of detention to which adults are subjected within a day. While the criminal law consequences for an individual who was associated with crime as a child take into account the person's initial age, the consequences in terms of the execution system do not take this into account. Therefore, the risks and needs of young people who entered as children and reached the age of 18 in imprisonment need to be examined in the context of the rights of children in prison.

1.2. General Conditions

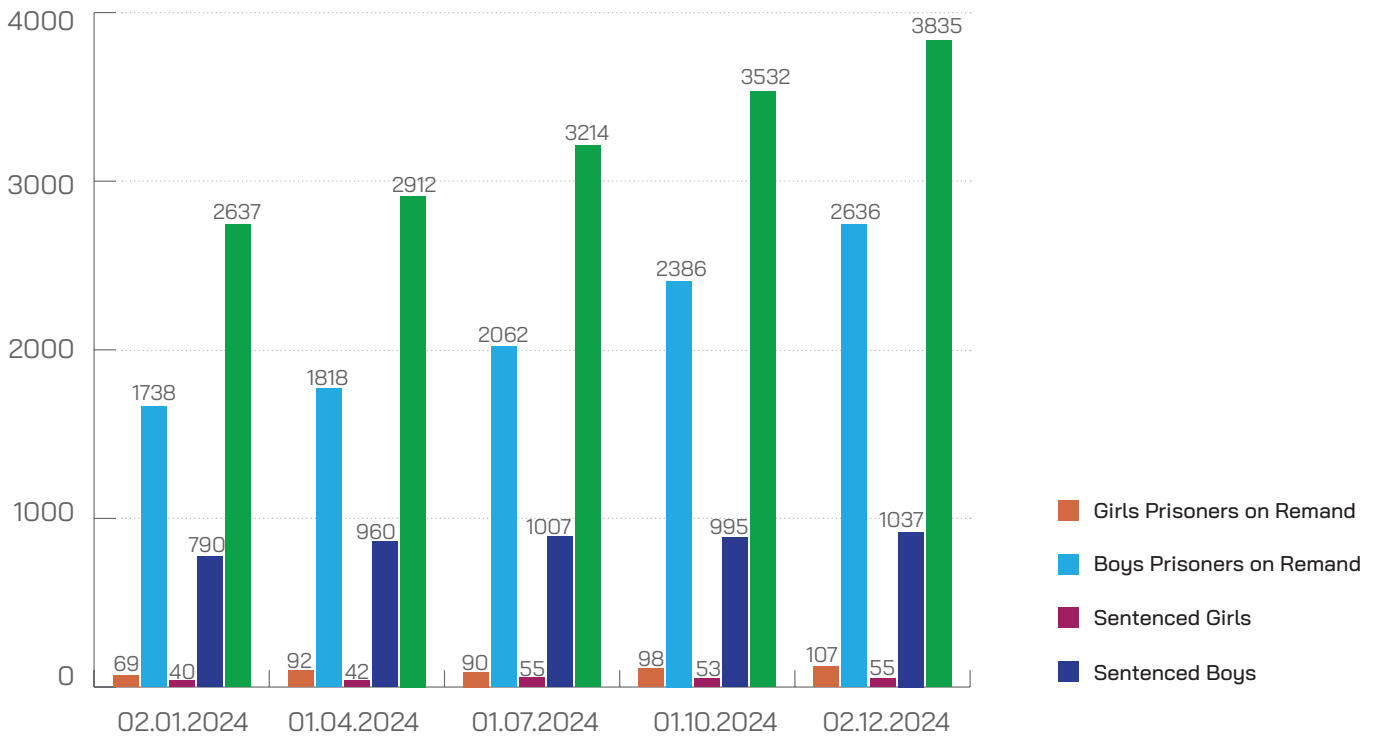
Like the justice system itself, prisons are not spaces designed or built for children. One of the most important indicators of this is the inadequacy of legislation, another is the deepening of rights violations experienced in practice at an intersectional level for children.

Being subjected to an adult system, being affected in deeper and more multidimensional ways by the violence created by confinement, encountering more obstacles while developing a self-advocacy mechanism against the rights violations they suffer, increases the special needs of children in prison compared to an adult prisoner in prison or a free child outside. The conditions of imprisonment render children more vulnerable to the violence they will be exposed to and more passive in accessing their existing rights. For this reason, children in prison constitute one of the prisoner groups with special needs. Among these children however, intersectionally more disadvantaged groups also emerge. Girls are held in more severe isolation conditions than boys. Children in prison for political reasons are imprisoned for longer periods due to the length of their trials or the political climate in the country. Children who are foreign nationals are not provided with sufficient support to express themselves, compared to children whose native language is Turkish and adult foreign nationals.

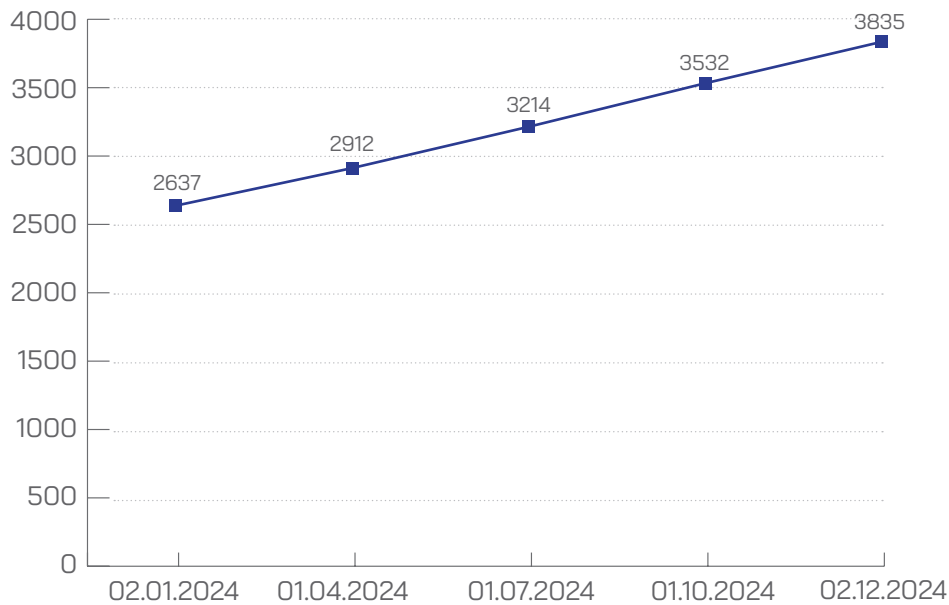
The number of children in prison increased in 2024. According to data shared on the official website of the General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Houses, the population, status, and gender distribution of children in prison are shown in the tables and graphs below. Children aged 0-6 who are held with their mothers are not included in the official data. The most recent data on these children, provided in response to a parliamentary question submitted by MP Süleyman Bülbül, indicates that as of September 2, 2024, the number of children held with their mothers is 759⁴⁶.

⁴⁶ Ministry of Justice Legislation Directorate General, (2024). Written Question Proposal https://cdn.tbmm.gov.tr/KKBSPublicFile/D28/Y2/T7/WebOnergeMetni/ac0234d0-9210-4240-9089-d83f5b5cbe81.pdf?TSPD_101_R0=08ffce

Table 5: Distribution of the Child Prison Population by Gender and Status



Total Child Prison Population



1.3. Prominent Issues

Access to information on children in prison and their detention conditions is limited due to the lack of transparent, standardized information sharing and independent civil monitoring tools. Therefore, the highlights regarding children in prison are based on data obtained within these limitations.

1.3.1. Changes in Legislation Regarding Children in Prison

In 2024, there were few legislative developments concerning children in prison. Apart from the amendment to Law No. 5275 on the Execution of Penalties and Security Measures regarding children in prison's access to education, protocols signed between the Ministry of Justice and certain institutions introduced new regulations concerning children in prison. The "Cooperation Protocol in the Field of Combating Addiction" signed between the Ministry of Justice and the Turkish Yeşilay Association includes a number of initiatives specific to juvenile prisoners.⁴⁷ According to the protocol articles, Green Crescent and Green Crescent Counseling Center (YEDAM) will organize introductory seminars for juvenile prisoners and their families identified as having a history of substance abuse and ensure their participation in these seminars. Establishing the necessary infrastructure for YEDAM experts to conduct individual interviews, training, and seminars with juvenile prisoners via online platforms is the responsibility of penal institutions; providing guidance to juvenile prisoners after their release is among the responsibilities of Yeşilay. The Model Open Penal Institution for Minors Cooperation Protocol signed between the General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Houses and Firat University states that the purpose of the protocol is to "reduce the tendency of children in prison at the Elaziğ Education Center to commit crimes, enable them to spend their time in the institution much more productively, adapt to society after their release, to ensure that they know their material, moral, and cultural values, to enable them to build a new life by respecting the law and adopting lifelong learning as a principle, and to ensure that the new Open Penal Institution for Minors to be built is a model institution."⁴⁸

Policy Recommendation:

Regulations concerning children in prison, both in terms of criminal procedure and enforcement law, should be strengthened with a focus on child-friendly justice, and the relevant ministries and parliamentary committees should increase their efforts in this direction.

1.3.2. Monitoring of Children in Prison

As a consequence of imprisonment, children in prison also have extremely limited communication with the outside world. The "Smart Technologies Integration Project for Penal Institutions" (ACEP) project, carried out by the Ministry of Justice, has made it possible for prisoners to have video calls, thereby expanding the scope of their telephone call rights. Juvenile prisoners and female prisoners with children aged 0-6 have been granted twice the normal duration of this visitation right. However, in prisons where the ACEP project has not yet been implemented, prisoners' visitation rights are limited to 10 minutes via payphone, as stipulated by law. According to observations made, it has been determined that in 2024, not every children in prison has access to video call rights and the call durations defined for this right.

Policy Recommendation:

The video call option defined by the ACEP project should be extended to all prisons, and for children in prisons where the necessary technological infrastructure has not yet been established, the duration of voice calls should be extended to match the duration of video calls defined in the legislation.

⁴⁷ General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Houses, (2024). Cooperation Protocol signed between the Ministry of Justice and the Turkish Green Crescent Society. <https://cte.adalet.gov.tr/Resimler/Dokuman/19122024161552P86.pdf>

⁴⁸ General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Houses, (2024). Cooperation Protocol signed between the General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Houses and Firat University on the "Model Children's Education Center." <https://cte.adalet.gov.tr/Resimler/Dokuman/7012025141120P88.pdf>

Prisoners' communication with the outside world should not be limited solely to the family visitation rights defined by law. It is extremely important to conduct independent civil monitoring to observe the conditions of detention and the rights violations they experience, and for children to be able to reach their lawyers and rights-based organizations through secure channels. However, in 2024, it was still not possible for civil society organizations to visit prisons to conduct rights-based monitoring.

Human Rights and Equality Institution of Türkiye (TİHEK) visited the Maltepe Children and Youth Closed Penal Institution on July 2-3, the Marmara Women's Closed Penal Institution on July 31-August 1, the Ankara Sincan Women's Closed Penal Institution on July 25-26, the Diyarbakır Women's Closed Penal Institution on September 18-19, Diyarbakır Women's Closed Penal Institution on September 18-19, İzmir Children and Youth Closed Penal Institution on October 15, Samsun Kavak Children and Youth Closed Penal Institution on October 15, and Mersin Tarsus Children and Youth Closed Penal Institution on November 28.⁴⁹

When examining the "recommendations" section of the visit reports on the closed penal institutions for children and youth where male prisoners are held, some of the findings that stand out are listed below.

- In general, due to the detention of more children than the institution's capacity, some children do not have personal space and belongings such as rooms, beds, and closets, and the institution's staff is also insufficient.
- There is no doctor in any institution to provide regular and effective health services.
- Despite the monitoring team observing signs of physical abuse and coercion during a visit, the facility physician reported that there were "no signs of physical abuse or coercion."
- Some recommendations specific to a prison indicate that the necessary care for children's privacy was not taken regarding examinations, open visits, and camera use.
- Although the Maltepe children's prison report stated that the use of soft rooms had been banned by a ministerial order since 2020, the recommendations given in the Tarsus children's prison report indicate that soft rooms are still in use in this prison.
- In several institutions, bathrooms, toilets, heating systems, radios, and televisions were broken or malfunctioning during visits.
- In relatively new prisons, the courses and activities provided for children in prison are inadequate.
- In prisons without separate ventilation for each cell, children benefit from shared ventilation on a rotational basis.
- Children are unable to access lawyers assigned by the bar association,
- There is no detailed monitoring note or recommendation regarding peer bullying or institutional violence,
- It was determined that children were also interviewed during the visit.

Some of the findings that stand out when examining the visit reports on women's closed penal institutions where female prisoners are held are listed below.

- There were very few observations and recommendations regarding girls during visits to women's prisons,
- It was recommended that a translated version of the handbook for foreign children who are sentenced or on remand be available in one prison,
- It was recommended that social and cognitive activities appropriate to the developmental level of the children be increased.

⁴⁹ TİHEK, (2024). Visit Reports. <https://www.tihekgovtr/kategori/rapor/Ziyaret-Raporlari>

- Unlike other institutions, it was observed that girls in the Ankara Sincan prison were held in a cell in the mother-child unit.

Policy Recommendation:

Considering the risk of retaliation and the possibility that children may feel unsafe around visiting delegations in the institutions where they are held, human rights violations, particularly torture and ill-treatment, should be investigated in a more effective, independent, impartial, and comprehensive manner.

Policy Recommendation:

Monitoring activities concerning girls aged 12-18 held in women's prisons should be deepened, particularly taking into account their specific needs at the intersection of gender and age. In this context, TIHEK should also strengthen its monitoring efforts for other children in intersectional groups (e.g., access to the rights and needs of foreign children and children with disabilities).

The Diyarbakır Bar Association Children's Rights Center has reported its findings and recommendations regarding the conditions of detention and rights violations suffered by girls.⁵⁰ Based on this report, following an ombudsman application, on November 19, 2024, the Public Oversight Authority made a number of recommendations to the Ministry of Justice regarding the conditions of detention of imprisoned girls.⁵¹ The report also serves as a more comprehensive monitoring report than oversight mechanisms such as TIHEK in terms of children's access to their rights, the violations they face, and the proposed improvements.

Policy Recommendation:

The knowledge and experience of civil society organizations and professional organizations specializing in the field should be sought for the identification of risks and needs of children in prison and the monitoring of their conditions of detention. In order for independent monitoring to take place, these mechanisms should be allowed to visit prisons.

Civil society organizations and professional organizations are one of the most important components of children's communication with the outside world. Obtaining support from independent bodies to ensure that children in prison have access to justice and effective legal remedies is one of the most effective ways to prevent rights violations and reduce the isolation of children. However, civil society organizations have long been unable to enter prisons to carry out rights-based monitoring. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child has called for contributions in 2024 for its General Comment No. 27, which will address children's access to justice and effective legal remedies. CISST has contributed to this report regarding the conditions and needs of children in prison. The report has not yet been published.

⁵⁰ Diyarbakır Bar Association, (2024). Report on Human Rights Violations and Detention Conditions of Girls Detained at the Diyarbakır Women's Closed Prison. <https://www.diyarbakirbarosu.org.tr/public/uploads/files/Cocukraporson.pdf>

⁵¹ Diyarbakır Bar Association, (2024). Recommendation of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye Ombudsman Institution to the Ministry of Justice regarding juveniles who are sentenced and on remand held at the Diyarbakır Women's Closed Prison. <https://www.diyarbakirbarosu.org.tr/public/uploads/document/karar-1911yyyy-1735778517.pdf>

It has been observed that both civil society and awareness of access to justice are limited in relation to children in prison and their families. This situation remains one of the factors that hinders civil society's access to children in prison. In addition, children's illiteracy, the possibility that their letters will not be sent, or the risk of retaliation are among the obstacles that may be encountered. Due to the secure and continuous communication between civil society organizations conducting rights-based monitoring activities and children in prison, monitoring the conditions of detention of children in prison in 2024 was mostly possible through the evaluation and comparison of reports from other institutions and structures in the field.

Policy Recommendation:

Safe, direct, and accessible communication channels should be established between children and civil society and professional organizations working on children's rights, such as bar associations.

1.3.3. Children Aged 0-6 Held With Their Mothers

Children detained with their mothers can stay in mother-child units, mother-child living areas, or standard women's wards. Specially designed mother-child units are available in Ankara and Diyarbakır women's prisons, and according to the Ministry of Justice's 2024 activity report, no new ones have been added. However, the Ministry of Justice did not respond to CISST's applications for the right to information on which prisons have playgrounds, kindergartens, and kindergarten branches for children, citing that it was "related to internal operations and not of public interest." The process was referred to the Ombudsman Institution (KDK). The Ministry's response to the KDK stated that mother-child units had been built in Erzincan and Marmara women's prisons, in addition to Ankara and Diyarbakır. Based on this response, the KDK issued a friendly settlement decision on October 8, 2024, but the question of which prisons have kindergartens, kindergarten branches, and children's play areas remained unanswered.

The following are some of the findings regarding children held with their mothers that stand out in the "recommendations" section of the reports from TIHEK's 2024 visits to the Marmara, Ankara, and Diyarbakır women's prisons:

- The menus prepared for children need to be enriched in terms of nutritional value.
- It is recommended that the institution employ personnel specialized in child development and organize appropriate activities for children.
- The physical structure of the mother-child units and living areas is suitable for young children, but certain safety measures were highlighted.
- The number of toys, books, and children's supplies in the visited institutions was found to be sufficient.

Policy Recommendation:

While mother-child units are relatively more suitable areas for children imprisoned with their mothers, alternative methods to imprisonment should be explored, taking into account the best interests of the child. Mother-child units should be expanded for cases where imprisoning children with their mothers is the last resort.



Women Prisoners



Number of prisoners corresponded with in 2024

223

Yıllık Tematik Anketlerin Yürütme ve İzleme İstatistikleri
and Death Fast
1



Psychosocial Services
-

Transfer Request
22



Administration and Monitoring Boards' Decisions and Execution
12

40



Isolation
38

Violation of Rights

Discrimination
11



Prison
54

Torture and ill-treatment
39



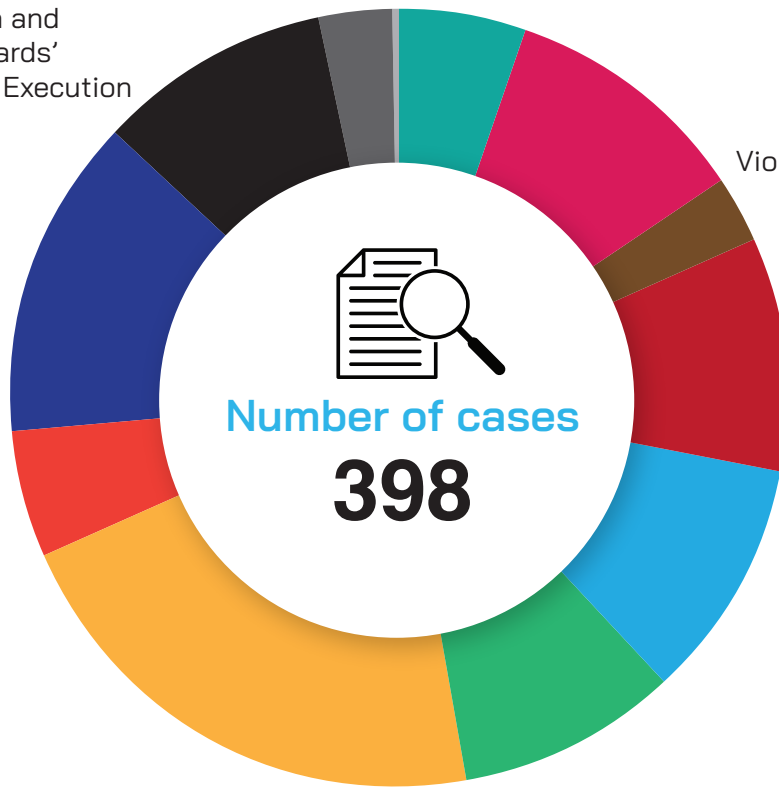
Discipline
20

Freedom of Expression
40



Thematic
85

Visits
36



2. WOMEN PRISONERS

2.1. Definition

In Türkiye's prison system, there is a gender blind approach towards the unique needs of women and girls in prisons. For women, who are mostly confined to private spaces created by the patriarchal system, prison spaces are areas where confinement, surveillance and control are deepened. There is a male-dominated administrative structure in the entire execution system from the General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Houses to prisons, and there is no unit specially organised for women prisoners. Due to the insufficient number of women's prisons, a significant portion of women prisoners stay in women's wards in mixed prisons. As a result, women are unable to benefit from many rights, such as using common areas, participating in sports activities, and working.

2.2. General Conditions

During 2024, information about the number of general prisoners was shared periodically on the website of the CTE. This information includes data on the distribution of prisoners according to the binary gender system.

There are a total of 20 women's prisons in Türkiye, 12 of which are closed and 8 of which are open.⁵² According to the latest statistics shared on the official website of the General Directorate of Judicial Records and Statistics, as of December 31, 2024, there were 16,903 women prisoners in prisons.⁵³

The current data does not include any information on whether women prisoners are held in women's prisons or in women's wards in mixed prisons. In particular, the failure to keep data on women prisoners held in women's wards in mixed prisons leads to the neglect of women's specific needs. For example, the number and variety of products in the canteens of these prisons are determined based on male prisoners.

2.3. Prominent Issues

Just as women's participation in economic life is limited in Türkiye, women who are included in the labor force mostly work under poor conditions and for very low wages. Due to these economic conditions resulting from constructed gender inequalities, women constitute one of the impoverished segments of society. This situation causes women who do not have an income or a regular income to experience economic difficulties in prisons. In particular, women prisoners who do not have a personal income, whose relatives have a poor economic situation or who are not in contact with their relatives have difficulty in meeting their basic needs. The increase in inflation in 2024 and the economic crisis in the country have further exacerbated the poverty of female prisoners. The primary economic difficulties experienced by women prisoners are the increase in the prices of the products sold at the canteen, transfer expenses, electricity bills, postage stamps and phone cards, and the restriction on the number of items that can be received from the outside.

⁵² Evrensel (2024). CISST announced December 2024 prison statistics. Access address:

<https://www.evrensel.net/haber/536156/cisst-aralik-2024-hapishane-istatistiklerini-acikladi>

⁵³ General Directorate of Judicial Records and Statistics, (2024). Distribution of prison population by gender, status, and nationality as of December 31, 2016-2024. <https://adlisicil.adalet.gov.tr/Home/SayfaDetay/ceza-infaz-kurumu-istatistikleri-2024-haber-bulteni-yayimlandi05052025091520>. Accessed on November 29, 2025.

2.3.1. Access to Healthcare

Regardless of their gender identity, for the transfer of the prisoners to a hospital, the prisoners must write a petition and visit the infirmary, and the infirmary physician must decide that the prisoner has an illness that requires transfer to an outside hospital. For dental examinations, a separate procedure is carried out and hospital referrals are more difficult to obtain in these examinations.⁵⁴ Among the problems prisoners experience in the field of health due to being women, there are examples such as male security guards accompanying female prisoners during hospital transfers, ignoring their personal needs or subjecting them to verbal harassment during long-term transfers, imposing handcuffed examination during women's health checks, and male security guards not leaving the examination room. There are no regular informative trainings on cancer screening tests, and prisoners who want to benefit from these tests should request to be referred to the hospital. This situation can lead to consequences such as the late detection of health problems of imprisoned women and the progression of the disease.

The inadequacy of food costs to cover catering costs due to the deepening economic crisis has negatively affected the nutritional value, diversity and quality of food distributed to prisoners in prisons. This prevented the adequate and balanced nutrition of women who were at greater risk of osteoporosis and iron deficiency. In addition, the increase in the prices of hygiene products sold in the canteen, especially pads, makes it difficult for female prisoners to live in a healthy and hygienic environment. Prison regulations impose a uniform clothing quota on all prisoners without considering conditions, needs, or climate differences. This situation makes it particularly difficult for women to meet their frequent clothing change, washing, and drying needs during their menstrual cycles.

Policy Recommendation:

Prisons should ensure that a doctor is always available. If possible, a gynecologist and women's health specialist should also be employed in areas where female prisoners are held. Regular check-ups should be conducted for issues requiring regular monitoring, and general preventive health interventions and information specific to women's health should be provided to both prisoners and staff.

Nutrition lists should be prepared under the supervision of nutritionists, taking into account gender-related physiological differences, needs, and desires, and healthy, high-quality meals should be provided.

Prison cells should be designed to be conducive to healthy living in terms of ventilation, architecture, lighting, heating, and space, and should not be overcrowded.

Changes should be made to the penal code regarding clothing, and flexibility should be provided in obtaining and keeping clothing based on factors such as gender and climate.

2.3.2. Access to Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare and Sanitary Pads

The General Directorate of Public Health recommends that women undergo cancer screening tests at regular intervals.⁵⁵ These include cervical cancer, breast cancer, colorectal cancer screening tests. Many women prisoners

⁵⁴ Korkut, B. (2018). Dental units. Being a Patient Prisoner in Türkiye. CISST.

⁵⁵ <https://hsgm.saglik.gov.tr/tr/kanser-taramalari> Accessed on 03.05.2024.

are unaware that they can benefit from these tests which leads to late detection of diseases. Although data was obtained in 2024 showing that female prisoners in some prisons were able to undergo these examinations, it was found that this practice has not become standard for all female prisoners.

CISST advocates that hygiene kits and especially pads should be distributed free of charge to prisoners within the scope of the right to health in prisons and has been campaigning for access to free pads since 2017. Before the campaign, female prisoners and transgender male prisoners obtained their pads from the canteen for a certain fee. In some prisons, they were provided with free pads if they submitted an application, after the campaign. However, this change in practice has not been reflected in the law. Therefore, there are women and trans men who are not aware of the change in practice. On the other hand, free pad requests are arbitrarily rejected by some prison administrations. Despite some execution judgements decided in favor of the complaints made by the prisoners who were not given pads free of charge, the prison administration has not provided them. In addition, there are complaints that the pads distributed free of charge are thick, old, uniform. Prisoners who do not want to use pads for personal or health reasons cannot access alternatives such as tampons and menstrual cups, and applied to our organization for complaint.

Policy Recommendation:

Prisoners should be provided with hygiene and cleaning supplies, primarily pads and tampons, free of charge in a variety and quality appropriate to their needs, and prisoners' free access to these supplies should be legally guaranteed.

2.3.3. Ward Searches and Body Searches

Problems are experienced during the search of prisoners at prison entrances and exits. In some prisons, even though female prisoners are searched by female security guards at the prison during hospital or court transfers, they are also requested to be searched by external security guards. Some women refuse to accept this practice and return to their cells or rooms, avoiding access to health services as much as possible due to the current practices.

Ward searches conducted by large numbers of staff, either suddenly or too frequently, cause anxiety among women prisoners. During the searches, their belongings and books that they have previously received from the canteen or their relatives from outside can be confiscated. Disciplinary investigations may be initiated against them due to these items.

In addition, cameras in the cells and rooms monitor the prisoners' private areas. This restricts the women's freedom of movement. For example, they do not feel comfortable scratching themselves when their bodies itch. Additionally, visibility of bathroom and toilet exits from cameras obliges women to re-dress when returning to their rooms to retrieve their belongings they may have forgotten. Similarly, electrical sockets used to heat wax are only located in areas visible to the cameras can be given as an example of the discomfort experienced by women. Cameras in the yards can see the dormitory section which causes women to be or feel watched even in the areas where they sleep and change.

Policy Recommendation:

Detailed search and internal body search should be completely abolished, whether the prisoner is in possession of prohibited substances or items should be determined by using tools such as scanning devices, body searches should be carried out by a medical doctor even with a device, and women should be able to choose the gender of the doctor. All search practices should be subject to strict conditions, these conditions should be clearly regulated in the laws, and searches should be carried out completely outside the surveillance area of male execution guards and gendarmerie officers.

2.3.4. Transfers Between Prisons and Official Visits

Voluntary transfer requests from prisoners are mostly rejected on the grounds of overcapacity, and as a result prisoners stay in prisons away from their families and children. Families cannot visit their prisoners' relatives staying in remote prisons due to health problems, inability to meet transportation and accommodation fees due to the deepening of the economic crisis. This exacerbates the experience of confinement and isolation for female prisoners.

Policy Recommendation:

Women should be kept in prisons close to their families and social circles, the transfer requests they make for this purpose should be met, the travel expenses of the families for the visit should be minimized, and the visit hours should be extended.

2.3.5. Socialization and Communication with the Outside World

Women in some prisons could not access their right to be taken to workshops, chats, outdoor and indoor sports areas, to use the library and movie theaters, while others benefited from these rights together with prisoners in their same ward. The video call system is implemented in some prisons and for certain types of offenses, but not for others. This discriminatory practice restricts the communication of women prisoners who cannot access this and therefore to the outside world. These restrictions further aggravate the confinement of women in prisons, who are also often confined to private areas in society. In prisons, it prevents the creation of alternatives such as the participation of women in vocational and educational activities that will prevent them from being confined to the house/private area again after release.

Alternative care services to support the development of children are not created for female prisoners with children outside. Prisoners who are mothers, can only communicate with their children through visits and phone calls. This negatively affects the development of children and constitutes secondary punishment for prisoners who are mothers. On the other hand, the discrimination created between prisoners due to certain conditions for the use of telephone and audio-video call systems cause indirect discrimination among children depending on whether their mothers meet these conditions.

Politika Önerisi:

Hapishanelerde kadınların, aktif olarak organize edilmesinde yer aldığı etkinlikler, kurslar, atölyeler düzenlenmelidir. Mahpuslar arası sosyalleşme olanakları artırılmalıdır.

Policy Recommendation:

Practices that strengthen women’s relationships with their social circles outside of prison should be developed.

Policy Recommendation:

Alternative care services should be provided to parents in prison to enable them to visit their children, establish personal relationships, and support their children’s healthy development.

2.3.6. Economic Difficulties

Some of the female prisoners meet their economic needs with the help of their relatives or by working in the prison. However, the deterioration of the economic situation of their relatives due to the deepening economic crisis and the reflection of increasing inflation on prison expenses cause women to be unable to meet their needs. Women who work in prisons by fulfilling the necessary conditions to earn financial income receive very small wages. Working areas generally consist of sectors such as textiles, food, and cleaning, which are traditionally seen as women’s work in the patriarchal division of labor. However, the income they earn by working is still insufficient to meet their needs. Some of the women who cannot fulfill working conditions in the prison meet some of their needs by doing the work of other prisoners in their wards, but this can create a hierarchical relationship between the prisoners.

Policy Recommendation:

Prisoner women in need of economic support should be identified and supported. All prisoners who want to work should be provided with the opportunity to work, women should be directed to work areas that are suitable for their abilities, needs and interests and offer the opportunity to acquire a profession, and a sexist perspective should be abandoned in this process.

2.3.7. Torture and Ill-Treatment

Data on male violence in Türkiye points to a persistent and structural problem on a societal scale.⁵⁶ The high rate of violence experienced by women indicates that a significant proportion of women in prisons were also subjected to violence prior to their incarceration. However, as of 2024, no systematic data has been collected on the forms of violence experienced by female prisoners in Türkiye’s prisons in the past, and no gender-sensitive assessment mechanism has been established in this regard. This deficiency renders invisible the violent pasts, traumas, and risks of renewed rights violations experienced by female prisoners.

This situation reflects the dominance of policies that are presented as “neutral” in the criminal justice system but are in fact gender-blind. However, individualized sentencing regimes need to be organized with a trauma-based approach, especially for female prisoners who have been subjected to violence in the past.

⁵⁶ Bianet, (2025). Male Violence Register. <https://bianet.org/proje/erkek-siddeti-cetelesi-285345>

Another factor that increases the invisibility of female prisoners' experiences of violence is the socially narrow definition of male violence. Influenced by patriarchal norms, violence is reduced to physical forms such as "beating" or "sexual assault" through the media and social discourse, while psychological, economic, or structural forms of violence often go unrecognized. As a result, some women are unable to identify the attitudes they are subjected to as violence.

This situation takes on a different appearance in prison conditions. Certain practices carried out under the guise of security measures (e.g., frequent searches, camera surveillance, violation of personal space) are experienced as violence by women. However, the feelings of powerlessness and guilt created by imprisonment can cause women to internalize the violence they experience or believe that they "deserve" it. This attitude is particularly evident among women in detention.

Cases reported to CISST throughout 2024 show that various forms of violence and discriminatory practices continue during the prison process. From the moment they enter prison, women face the risk of stigmatization, isolation, and separation from their children.

In Türkiye, Law No. 6284 on the Protection of the Family and the Prevention of Violence Against Women is one of the most fundamental legal instruments in the fight against violence. However, as of 2024, there is no implementation mechanism or protection procedure related to this law within the penal system.

This means that women in prisons who are at risk of male violence are completely excluded from the protection and prevention measures provided for individuals who are not incarcerated. Female prisoners cannot request protective or preventive measures under Law No. 6284 against the physical, psychological, or sexual violence they are subjected to, and they lack an effective recourse mechanism against prison staff, other prisoners, or security guards who are perpetrators of violence.

In 2024, among the applications received by CISST, it was observed that no protective measures were implemented in relation to allegations of verbal, physical, or sexual violence suffered by female prisoners within prisons, and that these complaints were mostly suppressed on the grounds of disciplinary or security measures. This also demonstrates that the implementation of Law No. 6284 has been effectively suspended in the prison context.

Policy Recommendation:

Data on a history of violence against women in prisons should be collected and analyzed in accordance with the principle of confidentiality, and individualized social service plans should be developed based on this data.

Policy Recommendation:

Workshops to raise awareness should be held for prisoners, with their active participation, covering the definition, types, and sources of violence. Awareness-raising workshops on topics such as gender and violence should also be organized for the administration and staff.

Policy Recommendation:

Independent, accessible, and effective complaint mechanisms based on the principle of confidentiality should be established where women can report cases of rights violations they have experienced and submit their complaints.

Policy Recommendation:

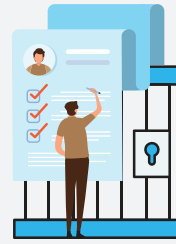
Legal support should be provided to women at risk of violence under Law No. 6284 prior to their removal from the home, the necessary court decisions should be obtained, and coordination should be established with the Women's Shelter and other relevant institutions.

Policy Recommendation:

Services should be provided to women on preparing for the post-eviction process, housing, employment, protection from post-eviction violence, and psychosocial support. In this context, coordination between public institutions and civil society organizations should be developed.



LGBTI+ Prisoners



Number of prisoners corresponded with in 2024

99



Yıllık Temel İnsan Hakları İstatistikleri
and Death Fast
5



Administration and
Monitoring Boards'
Decisions and Execution
-



Psychosocial
Services
2



Isolation
58



Prison
33



Discipline
13



Thematic
44

Transfer Request
29



Violation of Rights
9



Discrimination
21



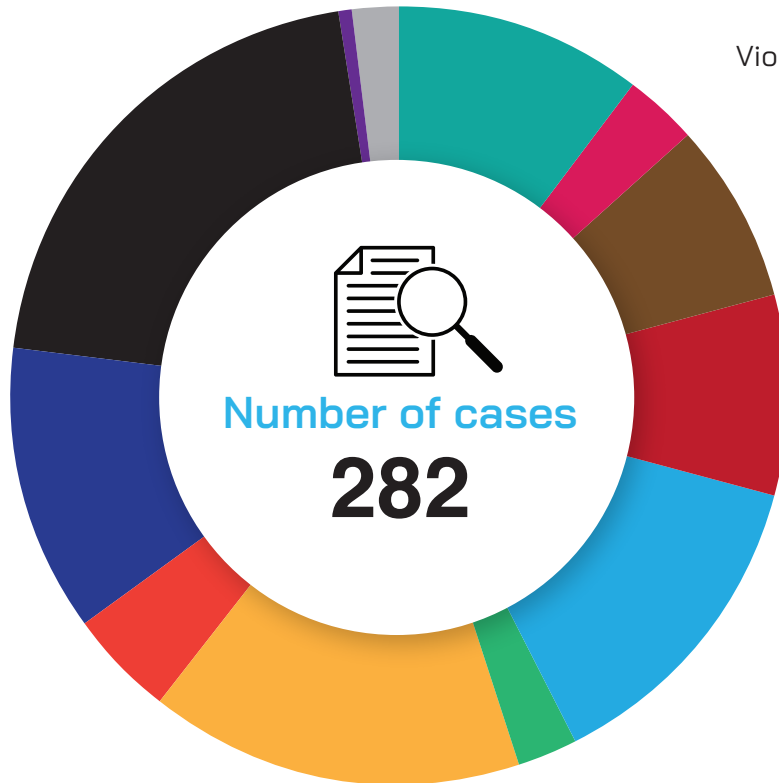
Torture and
ill-treatment
24



Freedom of
Expression
37



Visits
7



3. LGBTI+ PRISONERS

3.1. Definition

In Türkiye, LGBTI+ prisoners are held in prisons whose administrative and physical conditions are planned and built with a cisgender⁵⁷ and heteronormative⁵⁸ perspective based on the binary gender system. The prison system, which has not been updated for the needs of LGBTI+ prisoners, negatively affects the attitudes of the prison administration and staff, and further stratifies the difficulties faced by LGBTI+ prisoners in social life. LGBTI+ prisoners are placed in prisons and wards deemed “appropriate” based on the gender indicated on their identity cards or passports. Trans prisoners are placed in prisons compatible with their gender only if they go through the official legal and bureaucratic processes required by the State, otherwise their assigned gender is taken as a reference. LGBTI+ prisoners who have not undergone this official “gender confirmation process” are placed in special wards or single cells when they come out to the prison administration, receive a medical report or request to be kept separate from the general population due to their identity. Therefore, if LGBTI+ prisoners are not out to the prison administration or our association in terms of sexual orientation and gender identity, it is difficult to reach them, to identify their problems and to offer support on these problems.

3.2. General Conditions

Accessing data on LGBTI+ prisoners has not been possible in recent years. In October 2021, according to the information in the action report of the Government of Türkiye on the judgement of the case X. v. Türkiye case before the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), the number of prisoners on remand and sentenced, who identified as having a different sexual orientation than reported as of 2020 was stated as 164. In the action report issued by the government on April 26, 2022, there is no statistical data about the gender identities of prisoners and the details but it was stated that in the queries made by penal institutions, the number of people who have different gender identities is found as 255. Although it is stated that this data was provided by the CTE, there is no convincing or concrete information about how and by which method this number was obtained. The current number of prisoners is published periodically on the website of the General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Houses, but this data is shared on the basis of a binary gender system. Applications for information made by CISST regarding statistical data were left unanswered on the grounds that it is “in-house information that does not concern the public”, as in previous years. For these reasons, the current number of LGBTI+ prisoners is unknown.

The up-to-date statistical information we have on LGBTI+ prisoners consists of prisoners who have reached out to CISST or who our association has been informed about and contacted by the press, etc. Accordingly, the number of LGBTI+ prisoners recorded in our records since 2014 is 299, and 99 LGBTI+ prisoners were contacted in 2024.

Considering the differences in practice in women’s and men’s prisons and the fact that LGBTI+ people often want to hide their identities in order not to be exposed to discrimination, it can be said that the actual number of prisoners is much higher.

⁵⁷ “Cisgender (‘Cis’): Tr. Natrans or cis. (Pronounced ‘Sis’.) Refers to people whose gender identity matches the gender assigned to them at birth. The prefix cis-means ‘this side’ in Latin, and its use in the context of gender identity has become popular globally in the last decade thanks to trans rights activists. The term natrans was introduced into Turkish literature by the trans activist Aligül Arıkan, who passed away in 2013.” Gedizlioğlu, Deniz (2020) LGBTI+ Rights Translation Dictionary, KaosGL Publications, Ankara p.17

⁵⁸ “Heteronormativity: The idea that heterosexuality is the primary form and norm of sexual orientation, based on the binary gender system. It assumes that the most appropriate form of sexual and romantic relationships—and marriage—is between a woman and a man. According to a heteronormative perspective, there is a linear relationship between the sex of the body (See: Sex), sexual orientation, gender identity (See: Gender Identity), and gender roles. The systematic application of heteronormativity gives rise to heterosexism.”

Gedizlioğlu, D., (2020). Translation Dictionary in the Field of LGBTI+ Rights. KaosGL Publications, Ankara, p.31.

3.3. Prominent Issues

The prominent issues related to the situation of LGBTI+ prisoners in 2024 were; de facto isolation, relations with the outside world, economic difficulties, access to health services, access to transgender-specific health services, access to justice, LGBTI+ prisoners living with HIV, social conditions, transfers and discrimination-based torture and ill-treatment.

3.3.1. Isolation

LGBTI+ prisoners are subjected to de facto isolation, even though this is not required by sentencing regimes. It is stated that LGBTI+ prisoners who are kept separated from the general population are kept in special cells or wards. In this context, LGBTI+ prisoners can be subjected to solitary confinement, which is applied as a disciplinary punishment for prisoners without aggravated life sentences, for long periods, sometimes until their sentences are completed. LGBTI+ prisoners staying in these cells cannot benefit from social and physical activities and the right to work that other prisoners are unable to benefit from, citing reasons such as overcapacity and lack of personnel. Therefore, LGBTI+ prisoners are condemned to loneliness within the prison. Furthermore, assessments of good behavior, which are important in determining release dates, are also negatively affected by these reasons. Due to being held in isolation, LGBTI+ prisoners cannot participate in workshops and sports activities that have a positive effect on the assessment of good behavior, and their requests for work are not positively met.

In some prisons, a ward can be assigned to trans women/trans feminine prisoners or gay/bisexual male prisoners⁵⁹ when there are sufficient numbers and conditions. It has been stated that trans women/trans feminine prisoners are placed in prisons appropriate to their identities, where they can be included in the general population, provided that they complete the official confirmation process. However, statements have been made that a small number of trans masculine/trans male prisoners we are in contact with and are subjected to de facto isolation under all circumstances, whether they are held in women's or men's prisons. These prisoners also stated that they were subjected to violence by the prison administration and personnel due to their gender identity.

The claim that the isolation conditions, which were the subject of the *X v. Türkiye* case before the ECtHR and found to be in violation⁶⁰, with regards to the prohibition of discrimination was the subject of an application to TİHEK by a prisoner who was transferred after being sexually assaulted in the prison where he was previously held and was kept alone in the institution to which he was transferred. In the relevant decision, it was decided that there was no need to take a decision about the prisoner later on since they were transferred to a prison with an LGBTI+ ward at their own request.⁶¹ Although it is assumed that the problem has been solved by transferring the prisoner to a prison with an LGBTI+ ward, it is obvious that the violations subject to the application are the violations encountered in the conditions of detention of LGBTI+ prisoners. Prisoners applying from prisons in different regions of Türkiye reported 58 cases of solitary confinement throughout 2024.

Policy Recommendation:

LGBTI+ prisoners should not be held in solitary confinement under any circumstances, if it is not required by sentencing regulations.

⁵⁹ The belief that women's prisons are safer than men's prisons, along with reasons such as invisibility and the desire to remain hidden, means that the number of LGBTI+ prisoners whose gender is assigned as female in their official identity is significantly lower than the number of LGBTI+ prisoners whose gender is assigned as male in their official identity.

⁶⁰ <https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/tur?i=001-120280>

⁶¹ TİHEK, (2021). Türkiye Human Rights Equality Agency 2nd Chamber Decision. <https://www.tihkek.gov.tr/public/images/kararlar/rc330m.%20s>

Policy Recommendation:

The necessary arrangements should be made to ensure the safety of LGBTI+ prisoners and to benefit from their rights such as participation in social activities and work.

3.3.2. Communication with the Outside World

Prisoners' communication with the outside world is limited to lawyer visits, letters, phone calls, and open/closed visits. Article 83 of Law No. 5275 on the Law on the Execution of Penalties and Security Measures regulates who can visit prisoners and stipulates that visitors must be the prisoner's spouse, blood relatives up to the third degree, in-laws, guardian, or trustee, subject to documentation.

It has been observed that many LGBTI+ prisoners have little or no contact with their families due to homophobia/transphobia or other reasons. For LGBTI+ prisoners who have no contact with their families, the aforementioned regulation disproportionately restricts their connection with the outside world. Similarly, telephone privileges are limited to only those who can visit. Especially for LGBTI+ prisoners who do not have strong family ties, who grew up in a foster home or whose family members are not alive, the right to phone and video calls is currently inaccessible, while the increasing phone card and video call fees have created challenging economic and social conditions for LGBTI+ prisoners experiencing poverty. Especially for LGBTI+ prisoners who cannot use the right to visit, video call and telephone, sending letters is the only means of communication. However, some LGBTI+ prisoners cannot afford letter fees economically.

Furthermore, despite not being required by sentencing regimes, LGBTI+ prisoners held in isolation conditions are unable to benefit from video call rights due to their isolation status. Consequently, LGBTI+ prisoners held in isolation conditions cannot benefit from the ACEP system implemented by the Ministry of Justice, which enables video calls.

Policy Recommendation:

The scope of persons permitted to visit, as restricted by Law No. 5273, should be expanded to enable LGBTI+ prisoners to communicate with the outside world.

3.3.3. Access to Justice

Access to justice for LGBTI+ individuals is difficult and limited under all circumstances. This situation is shaped both by prejudices within judicial mechanisms and society, and by the lack of legal counsel and LGBTI+ friendly mechanisms. The difficulties generally experienced by prisoners in cases of enforcement law violations become even more layered when they intersect with the identities of LGBTI+ prisoners.

Prisoners conduct their outside affairs through guardians assigned to them or chosen by them. LGBTI+ prisoners must maintain this guardianship relationship with an assigned lawyer if no family member or close friend takes on this role. Many LGBTI+ prisoners report that the relationships they have established with their guardians are very

weak or that they have no communication at all. Increased hate speech against LGBTI+ individuals throughout 2024 may also affect LGBTI+ individuals' relationships with the outside world. On the other hand, they may also need a lawyer for legal proceedings outside of the case file for which they are imprisoned, such as divorce, legally initiating the gender affirmation process, name cases, and seeking legal remedies for violations they have suffered. However, due to economic hardship, they are often unable to cover the costs of lawyers and court fees. This leads LGBTI+ prisoners to seek support from CSOs and other organizations, but their needs are mostly unmet due to reasons such as limited information about where to obtain legal support and the inaccessibility of the helplines operated by CSOs and organizations providing legal support to prisoners.

In addition to the monitoring/censorship conditions applied to all prisoners in their correspondence and telephone communications, the difficulties experienced by LGBTI+ prisoners in communicating with the outside world, as mentioned above, also make it difficult for them to report the rights violations they experience in penal institutions. There have been cases where LGBTI+ prisoners who reported the problems they experienced in prison via telephone, video calls, and letters were subjected to disciplinary punishment on the grounds that they had defamed the institution, were subjected to verbal and psychological violence, and were unable to report their complaints for fear of possible retaliation and punishment.

Policy Recommendation:

A booklet should be prepared explaining the rights of LGBTI+ prisoners and how to apply to which authority when faced with rights violations, explaining the bar association's legal aid services and including an application form. This booklet should be given to them upon their entry into prison. Guardians appointed by the bar association to which they belong should be made aware of the possible special needs of LGBTI+ prisoners.

3.3.4. Economic Difficulties

According to data from the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK), inflation at the end of 2024 was calculated at 58.51%. The annual inflation rate has also deeply affected LGBTI+ prisoners. Letters we received throughout 2024 show that prisoners are living in deep poverty, unable to meet even basic needs such as drinking water.

LGBTI+ prisoners must cover the costs of supplementary and fortified food products, electricity bills, hygiene and cosmetic products, clothing, legal expenses in some cases, and gender affirmation process expenses themselves. Most LGBTI+ prisoners who do not have strong family ties do not have relatives outside prison who can provide financial support. The separation of LGBTI+ prisoners from the general population, whether in solitary confinement or with other LGBTI+ prisoners, also deprives them of their right to work. This means that LGBTI+ prisoners do not have access to the source of income that other prisoners have through prison work. The separation of LGBTI+ prisoners from the general population sometimes means that they do not have access to many items that other prisoners share, such as televisions, radios, and kettles. Consequently, the actual isolation and economic hardship experienced by prisoners compound the severity of poverty.

Another source of income for LGBTI+ prisoners is selling handicrafts they make through solidarity relationships they establish with the outside world. The relationships prisoners established with the outside world weakened after the pandemic, leading to a narrowing of these areas of solidarity. Rising inflation has caused handicraft materials to become more expensive and made it difficult for prisoners to afford materials such as beads, thus significantly reducing the limited income opportunities prisoners have

Policy Recommendation:

LGBTI+ prisoners should also benefit from the vocational courses, work workshops, and open prison rights granted to other prisoners. Solutions should be found to compensate for the social and economic rights losses experienced by LGBTI+ prisoners.

3.3.5. Access to Healthcare Services

LGBTI+ prisoners' first encounter with health services involves not only their verbal statements to be kept separate from the general prison population, but also receiving a diagnosis of "gender identity or sexual identity disorder" from the psychiatric clinic and having this reported.⁶² LGBTI+ prisoners have reported that during hospital visits, they face discrimination based on both their gender identity and sexual orientation and their status as prisoners, and in some cases, doctors have refused to examine them. Throughout 2024, many LGBTI+ prisoners reported frequently experiencing difficulties with hospital referrals, waiting long periods for referrals, and being subjected to verbal and physical harassment by law enforcement officers at the hospitals to which they were referred. Violations experienced during transfers, such as being placed in the same vehicle as other male prisoners, have been observed to cause prisoners to give up their requests for access to healthcare services.

Policy Recommendation:

Psychologists, social workers, family doctors, and physicians within prisons should be informed about the health access rights and gender affirmation process of LGBTI+ individuals, and homophobic and transphobic attitudes should be prevented.

LGBTI+ prisoners living with HIV reported to our association that they were subjected to rights violations throughout 2024. It has been determined that, despite the existence of an LGBTI+ ward in the institution, they were held in isolation in single rooms, their HIV status was disclosed to institution staff, their families, and other prisoners' relatives, they were taken out for ventilation alone, and their transfer requests were rejected on the grounds of medical reports, among other discriminatory practices and situations stemming from prejudice.

Policy Recommendation:

The privacy of prisoners living with HIV should be respected, awareness training should be provided to all prison staff to prevent discrimination, and effective monitoring should be implemented to prevent discrimination.

3.3.6. Access to Healthcare Services Specific to Trans Prisoners

Transgender prisoners can initiate, continue, or maintain hormone replacement therapy during their time in prison based on Article 40 of the Constitution. Hospital procedures and legal procedures for transgender prisoners who wish to amend the identity fields in their ID cards are the same as those outside. They can access hormones covered

⁶² In the 11th version of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) manual, sexual orientation is not included in the guidelines, while gender identity is now referred to as "incongruence" rather than "disorder." However, this is not yet in effect in Türkiye. The sexual orientation and gender identity of LGBTI+ prisoners are described as "disorders" and reported as pathological. <https://icd.who.int/browse10/2019/en#/F66.1>

by the Social Security Institution (SSI), access to equivalent medicine for possible side effects is subject to a fee, and the institution's physician is responsible for the administration of these hormones. Furthermore, on November 20, 2024, the Turkish Medicines and Medical Devices Agency (TİTCK) issued a statement requiring e-prescriptions for many testosterone and estrogen-boosting injections, gels, and oral contraceptives used by transgender individuals. This has invalidated the pre-existing prescriptions of transgender prisoners. The regulation has cut off transgender prisoners' access to hormones; they are required to be referred from the infirmary to a specialist in the relevant medical field and to have a new prescription issued by that specialist. It has been observed that transgender prisoners have been unable to access medication for long periods of time due to the lengthy process of having a new prescription issued.

Policy Recommendation:

Trans prisoners should be referred to the hospital at regular intervals during their transition process, examinations should be provided for issues such as the side effects of hormone medications, and prisoners should be prepared for the surgery process with other checks. Regulations should be made in an inclusive manner, taking into account their impact and outcomes in the prison environment.

The transition process for trans prisoners is hindered by many factors such as the hospitals conducting the transition process are limited to teaching and research hospitals, that these units are located in only a few provinces, that there is no clear and accessible information about the hospitals where transition operations are performed, and that it takes a very long time to get an appointment. The obstruction of these necessary processes for correcting the gender field on their identity documents and thus placing them in prisons consistent with their gender leads to prisoners being held separately from the general population, in some cases in solitary confinement and in other cases in LGBTI+ wards. In 2024, our association received complaints regarding the irregularities experienced in the transition processes. For instance one trans prisoner that the association is in contact with underwent surgery at a city hospital because there was no prison ward and surgery could not be performed at the university hospital. For this reason, the prisoner was considered a paying patient and was asked to pay the cost. As a result of the applications made, the requested payment was withdrawn.

Policy Recommendation:

The gender affirmation processes of trans prisoners should not be disrupted by arbitrary and bureaucratic obstacles. The use of hormone medications and gender affirmation processes should be monitored by specialist doctors, and trans prisoners should be informed throughout the process.

Policy Recommendation:

Hospitals monitoring the transition process should be shared with transgender prisoners on an ongoing basis, and prisoners should be transferred to the nearest prison.

3.3.7. Torture and ill-Treatment

Isolation has serious negative physical and psychological consequences for prisoners. Keeping LGBTI+ prisoners in separate cells or alone for security reasons makes them more vulnerable to ill-treatment by staff.

It is possible to say that hate speech and discriminatory policies directed at LGBTI+ individuals throughout 2024 directly paved the way for human rights violations against LGBTI+ individuals.⁶³ The anti-LGBTI+ discourse that dominates social life has also found its counterpart in prisons, where arbitrary practices and rights violations against LGBTI+ prisoners have continued as in previous years. These include sexual violence, economic violence, isolation, exile, and physical and psychological torture.

The conditions of isolation in which LGBTI+ prisoners find themselves not only make them more vulnerable to torture and ill-treatment, but also make it difficult for them to use complaint mechanisms and publicize their experiences. Prisoners who contacted our association via the email address often described their violations in a veiled manner or stated that there were issues they could not address in their letters, out of concern that their letters would not pass the reading committee or that they would be subjected to retaliation.

In other cases that have not been reported in the press and have become systematic, our association has filed complaints with human rights institutions. In some cases, however, intervention was not possible due to concerns for the prisoner's safety and wishes. Complaints from LGBTI+ prisoners subjected to physical, sexual, verbal, or psychological violence were not processed; they were placed in solitary confinement; their letters were blocked, restricting their communication with the outside world; and they were transferred to a different prison from the one where the incident occurred.

Policy Recommendation:

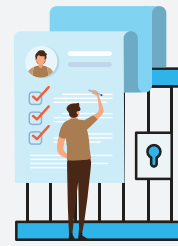
Civil monitoring tools should be activated to prevent violence and rights violations against LGBTI+ prisoners, and cooperation with civil society organizations should be facilitated in this context.

Monitoring committees should systematically conduct monitoring visits to prisoners with special needs, intensify their efforts to ensure that prisoners can use complaint mechanisms for possible violations, and prevent impunity in cases of torture and ill-treatment.

Penitentiary guards and all personnel should receive adequate and regular training on preventing homophobia/transphobia.

⁶³ <https://kaosgl.org/haber/lgbti-larin-2025-gundeminde-neler-var>

Prisoners With Health Conditions



Number of prisoners corresponded with in 2024

221

Yıllık Temel Hukuklar Statistikleri
and Death Fast
13



Psychosocial Services
15

Transfer Request
78



Administration and Monitoring Boards' Decisions and Execution
24

Violation of Rights
37



Isolation
18

Discrimination
146



Prison
44

Torture and ill-treatment
50



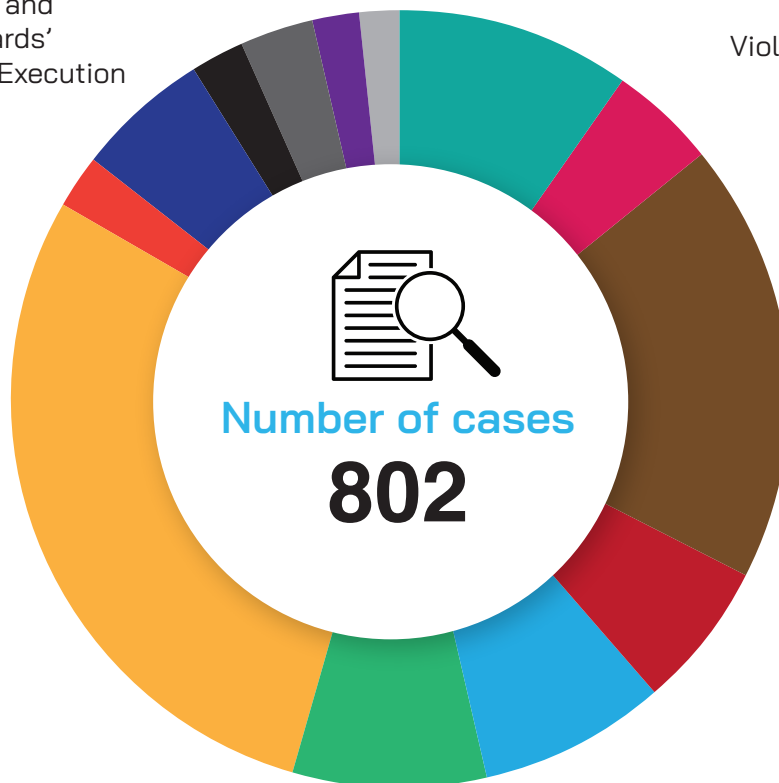
Discipline
19

Freedom of Expression
62



Thematic
232

Visits
64



4. PRISONERS WITH HEALTH CONDITIONS

4.1. Definition

Prisoners with health conditions have physical, mental, or psychological illnesses and therefore require regular treatment, care, and medical monitoring. According to the World Health Organization, health is not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, but a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being. Prisons are structurally closed, crowded environments with limited hygiene conditions. This makes prison conditions risky and inadequate for individuals with chronic illnesses, multiple illnesses, and those who have difficulty sustaining their lives on their own.

Delays in accessing healthcare, interruptions in treatment, and the inability to provide regular check-ups and medical evaluations lead to both the progression of the disease and a decline in the prisoner's quality of life. For this reason, prisoners with health conditions are among the prisoner groups with special needs.

4.2. General Conditions

Throughout 2024, the fundamental problems concerning prisoners with health conditions continued as in previous years, with access to healthcare, practices related to the postponement of sentences, and the decisive role of the Forensic Medicine Institution (FMI) remaining among the main factors limiting the right to health for prisoners with health conditions.

CTE has not shared statistics on prisoners with health conditions with the public, and applications for the right to information made by our association have been left unanswered on the grounds that they constitute "in-house information." For this reason, assessments regarding prisoners with health conditions are based on applications made directly to our association, correspondence, reports, and information obtained from the field.

In 2024, 221 prisoners with health conditions applied to CISST, bringing the total number of cases to 802.

Every year, our applications for the right to information regarding the "number of prisoners who lost their lives in prison" are left unanswered on the grounds of "in-house information." Despite this, the number of prisoners who lost their lives in prison is stated in SPACE reports.

In response to our parliamentary question regarding the number of prisoners who lost their lives in prison in 2024, it was stated that 709 prisoners had lost their lives as of November 28, 2024. This data clearly shows an increase in the number of prisoners who died in prisons between 2020 and 2024 compared to previous years.

The number of deaths in Türkiye's prisons has been steadily increasing over the past five years.

These figures clearly reveal the persistence of a structural problem in access to healthcare. Furthermore, the high mortality rates are directly related to delays in accessing healthcare, the ineffectiveness of the execution postponement mechanism, and the decisive role of the FMI. This situation demonstrates that, for prisoners with health conditions, access to treatment is in most cases directly linked to the right to life.

- In 2020, 128 prisoners,⁶⁴
- 446 prisoners in 2021 (101 of them inside prisons),⁶⁵
- 742 prisoners in 2022 (108 of them inside prisons),⁶⁶
- In 2023, 855 prisoners (476 of them inside prisons),⁶⁷
- and 818 prisoners in 2024.⁶⁸

FMI's reports stating that prisoners are "fit to remain in prison" have become the sole determinant in execution postponement processes, effectively limiting access to treatment for seriously ill prisoners. Many prisoners are released shortly before they lose their lives, demonstrating the ineffectiveness of the execution system in terms of the right to health and the right to life.

Furthermore, in 2024, under Circular No. 20/1 on Procedures for the Reduction or Remission of Sentences of Persons Due to Chronic Illness, Disability, or Old Age⁶⁹, a presidential decree remitted the remaining sentences of 14 prisoners on the grounds of chronic illness and old age.⁷⁰ This situation demonstrates that the right to health is not addressed universally or systematically and is inconsistent with the principle of equality.

Policy Recommendation:

Statistics on prisoners with health conditions in Türkiye's prisons should be kept based on the international definition of illness and broken down according to the type/rate of disability of prisoners, and should be made public.

Policy Recommendation:

Postponing or revoking sentences due to health issues should be evaluated within the scope of the right to life, the right to health, and the right to be treated with human dignity. These decisions should be implemented without discrimination through independent health committees.

4.3. Prominent Issues

When examining applications related to prisoners with health conditions in 2024, it is seen that the structural problems identified in previous years persist and have deepened in some areas. The topics on which prisoners most frequently provided information and requested applications were related to health, discrimination, requests for

⁶⁴ Council of Europe Portal, (2021). Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics, SPACE I 2021. https://wp.unil.ch/space/files/2024/01/SPACE-I_2021_FinalReport.pdf Access Date: 12.11.2025.

⁶⁵ Council of Europe Portal, (2022). Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics, SPACE I 2022. https://wp.unil.ch/space/files/2024/01/240111_SPACE-I_2022_FinalReport.pdf Accessed: 12.11.2025.

⁶⁶ Council of Europe Portal, (2023). Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics, SPACE I 2023. https://wp.unil.ch/space/files/2025/04/space_i_2023_report.pdf Accessed: 12.11.2025.

⁶⁷ Council of Europe Portal, (2024). Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics, SPACE I 2024. https://wp.unil.ch/space/files/2025/09/250924_rapport-space-i-2024.pdf Accessed: 12.11.2025.

⁶⁸ Ministry of Justice, (2025). Response to the parliamentary question regarding prisoners who lost their lives in penal institutions in 2024. <https://cdn.tbmm.gov.tr/KKBSPublicFile/D28/Y3/T7/WebOnergeMetni/d58ae8b7-40af-41a0-8a01-8e7b71dcde3d.pdf>

⁶⁹ Ministry of Justice, General Directorate of Penal Affairs, (2023). <https://rayp.adalet.gov.tr/resimler/1/dosya/surekli-hastalik-sakatlik-ve-kocama-sebebiyle-kisilerin-cezalarinin-haftletilmesi-veya-kaldirilmesi-hakkinda-islemler03-01-20239-38-am.pdf>

⁷⁰ Presidency of Communications of the Republic of Türkiye, (2024). <https://www.iletisim.gov.tr/turkce/haberler/detay/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-14-hukumlunun-cezasini-kaldirdi>

transfer due to health reasons, freedom of expression, and restrictions on the right to visit. In addition, applications mainly focus on delays in hospital transfers, physical pain caused by transfers in ring vehicles, shackled examination practices, nutrition and hygiene standards becoming dependent on economic conditions, restrictions on access to letters and telephone calls due to cost barriers, and limited participation in social areas. All of these problem areas show that prisoners with health conditions' access not only to the right to treatment but also to a life worthy of human dignity is at risk within prison conditions.

In 2024, the main problem areas for prisoners with health conditions are the practices of the Penitentiary and FMI, the continued detention of seriously ill prisoners in prison, discriminatory practices against prisoners with health conditions within prisons, economic difficulties limiting treatment and communication processes, and the failure to meet requests for transfer to another prison for health reasons. The following sections address these topics in line with case content and trends throughout the year.

4.3.1. Postponement of Execution of Sentences and Forensic Medicine Institution

In 2024, requests for postponement of execution by prisoners who are too ill to be treated in prison were largely rejected on the grounds of reports by the FMI stating that they were "fit to remain in prison." This practice stems from the implementation of Article 16 of Law No. 5275 on the Execution of Penalties and Security Measures. The legislation effectively makes the FMI report mandatory and the sole determining factor for postponing execution; health committee reports issued by university or training and research hospitals are considered secondary.

Furthermore, the phrase "assessed as not posing a serious and concrete threat to public safety" in Article 16(6) functions as an ambiguous and arbitrary barrier, particularly for political prisoners. The vague security justification placed against the right to health and life limits access to the sentence postponement process for prisoners with health conditions.

As a result of this practice, prisoners with serious and terminal illnesses are unable to access their right to treatment, and in most cases, the suspension of execution is only applied in the final stages of life, shortly before the prisoner's death.

The number of prisoners who have applied for a stay of execution of their sentence and benefited from this right is 2,811 for criminal offenses and 138 for terrorism offenses from 2013, when the stay of execution regulation came into force, to June 12, 2024. 138 for terrorism, totaling 2,949. In 2023, there were 390, and in 2024, up to June 12, 2024, there were 288.⁷¹

⁷¹ Grand National Assembly of Türkiye Human Rights Investigation Commission Minutes Journal, (2024). Page 18. <https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/Tutanaklar/TutanakGoster/3279>

Policy Recommendation:

Article 16 of the Execution of Penalties and Security Measures should be revised taking into account the following recommendations.

- Reports obtained from universities and teaching hospitals should be sufficient for postponing enforcement, without being bound by reports prepared by the FMI that are controversial in terms of impartiality and far from scientific reality.
- Processes related to clinical decisions should be open to the participation and supervision of a panel of experts acting with full clinical independence, as envisaged in the Mandela Rules.
- The phrase “assessed as not posing a serious and concrete danger to public safety,” which leads to subjective evaluations, should be removed.

4.3.2. Prisoners with Serious Illnesses

According to the UN, a terminal illness refers to a situation where there is no reasonable medical possibility that a patient’s condition will not deteriorate and result in death.⁷² Serious illness is used for situations where the chances of recovery are low and the symptoms of the illness are advanced.

The care and treatment of prisoners with serious illnesses in prison conditions has remained one of the most fundamental problems in 2024. The treatment of prisoners with chronic illnesses, disabilities, advanced age, neurological disorders, respiratory and cardiovascular diseases cannot be carried out regularly and comprehensively due to the limited health infrastructure in prisons. Delays in hospital referrals, lack of access to inpatient treatment, and short consultation times lead to the progression of diseases and an increased risk of dependency on care.

Letters sent to our association throughout 2024 reported that prisoners with serious illnesses are unable to meet even their personal care needs and can only carry out basic activities with the support of other prisoners. This situation creates a dependency relationship that violates human dignity for the prisoner receiving care and creates an obligatory and unpaid workload for the prisoner providing care.

The right to access healthcare in cases of serious disease requires not only access to treatment but also uninterrupted access to hospital check-ups under appropriate conditions, the fulfillment of hygiene and nutritional needs, and the provision of rest areas. The 2024 applications show that these requirements are largely unmet.

Policy Recommendation:

Inpatient treatment and specialist medical follow-up for prisoners with serious illnesses should be made routine, the care support system should be legally guaranteed, and alternative methods to imprisonment should be used for seriously ill prisoners.

4.3.3. Discrimination

Prisons are designed with an emphasis on security, and therefore do not meet the needs of prisoners with health conditions. Keeping prisoners with health conditions with those who do not in the same conditions is a violation of the prohibition of discrimination. In Type R prisons, all prisoners without regard to health conditions are kept in the

⁷² United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, (2013). Handbook on Prisoners with Special Needs, trans. Ömer B. Albayrak, 143. https://www.unodc.org/documents/justice-and-prison-reform/Prisoners_with_special_needs_HB_Turkish.pdf

same conditions, except for prisoners with addictions and in some wards. The crowded and unhygienic structure of prisons and limited access to health services prevent prisoners with health conditions from receiving regular treatment. Prisoners with health conditions in need of care do not have companions or caregivers in prisons. Their needs such as eating, washing dishes and laundry, bathing and toilet, are met by other prisoners. Being unable to access care services makes prisoners with health conditions dependent on other prisoners and deprives them of their right to live independently. This situation can also create a “heavy workload” for other prisoners.

Infectious diseases such as scabies, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, and hepatitis are frequently seen in prisons. Prisoners with these diseases are exposed to isolation and segregation. Isolation can be both physical and social. Even if not infectious, symptoms such as coughing, skin infections, or amputations can lead to discrimination by other prisoners and staff. The isolation of prisoners with infectious diseases in single rooms under the guise of isolation makes it difficult for them to communicate and socialize with the inside and outside of the prison. In 2024, the release of many prisoners sentenced to 30 years was postponed with the Decisions of the Administrative and Observation Board. The vast majority of them are prisoners with health conditions. Prolonged closure unfortunately brings severe illnesses with it, and the prolongation of the execution periods by the decisions of the Administrative and Observation Boards causes the conditions of prisoners with health conditions to deteriorate further.

Policy Recommendation:

For prisoners with infectious diseases, a medical isolation + social support model should be implemented instead of solitary confinement.

Policy Recommendation:

Considering that long-term closure brings physical and psychological health problems, the execution of sentence periods of prisoners with health conditions should not be extended and appropriate treatment opportunities should be provided.

Policy Recommendation:

Instead of facilities that isolate prisoners with illnesses and disabilities, such as Type R prisons, and prisoners with substance dependencies, such as addiction-type prisons, all prisons should be designed for sick, disabilities, and addicted prisoners, increasing opportunities for socialization and communication with the outside world.

4.3.4. Economic Difficulties

In 2024, one of the most common complaints from prisoners with health conditions was again related to nutrition conditions. Many prisoners with health conditions stated that they did not have access to the dietary meals required for their illnesses and that, in general, the meals were insufficient in quantity, low in nutritional value, and unhealthy. Inadequate and unbalanced nutrition negatively affects the course of existing illnesses and leads to weakened immunity, weight loss, and increased susceptibility to infectious diseases. Due to the small number of prisoners requiring dietary meals in the wards, prison administrations often refuse to prepare personalized dietary meals on the grounds that it is “not feasible in practice”; many prisoners are forced to consume meals that are not suitable

for their illnesses.

The inadequacy of the meals provided by the prison forces prisoners with health conditions to shop at the canteen. However, letters received by our association and case records from 2024 show that canteen prices have increased significantly compared to previous years. The rise in canteen prices not only affects nutrition but also makes access to basic hygiene products difficult. In 2024, complaints from prisoners with health conditions about not being able to access cleaning supplies and maintain hygiene in their rooms were frequently reported. This situation creates conditions conducive to the faster spread of skin diseases, fungal infections, and respiratory illnesses.

Furthermore, some medicines and medical supplies used in prisons are not covered by the Social Security Institution (SSI) or are only partially covered. Prisoners with health conditions without family support or whose families experience economic hardship have severely limited access to medicines, dressing materials, nutritional supplements, and hygiene products. As is the case outside, no monthly allowance is provided for patient care in prisons; the responsibility for care is often left to solidarity within the prison ward. This creates an additional burden and unequal responsibility for both the prisoner receiving care and the prisoner providing care.

Economic difficulties have had a direct impact not only on nutrition and hygiene, but also on the right to communicate with the outside world. A significant portion of the cases of violation of the right to correspondence and inability to send letters that reached our association in 2024 were primarily due to economic barriers. The increase in letter postage fees and the rising cost of phone cards have effectively cut off communication, especially for prisoners with health conditions whose families live in poverty. This situation not only means the weakening of the social support network, but also limits prisoners' right to communicate their health problems to the outside world, request help, and file applications. Therefore, economic conditions have become a decisive obstacle in terms of freedom of expression and the functioning of the right to seek justice.

Policy Recommendation:

- Dietary meals for prisoners with health conditions should be available in every prison, and the hygiene, quality, and portion sizes of meals should be regularly monitored.
- All medications and medical supplies should be covered under the SSI
- The home care allowance provided to patients outside prisons should also be provided to prisoners with health conditions in prisons,
- Postage and telephone call fees should be reorganized to include exemptions or discounts for prisoners with insufficient economic means,
- Basic hygiene supplies should be provided regularly and free of charge to prisoners with health conditions as part of a standard "hygiene kit."
- All these practices should be legally guaranteed.

4.3.5. *Transfer to Another Prison for Health Reasons*

The fact that many prisons in Türkiye are located in rural areas far from city centers makes it difficult for prisoners with health conditions to access regular treatment. Prisoners with health conditions who do not have the necessary specialist units in their prison are transferred to fully equipped hospitals with delays and irregularities, which interrupts the continuity of treatment. Applications received by our association in 2024 show that even when transferred to a hospital, inpatient treatment or advanced diagnostic facilities are often unavailable, causing many diseases to progress.

The conditions of transfer and transport themselves pose a serious health risk to prisoners with health conditions. Hospital transfers are often carried out using shuttle-type transport vehicles known as “rings,” which are narrow, airless, and make movement impossible, rather than ambulances. Prisoners with neurological, respiratory, cardiac, and orthopedic conditions, especially the elderly, have reported experiencing pain, respiratory distress, and circulatory problems during long ring journeys. This practice must be evaluated in terms of the prohibition of torture and ill-treatment.

In recent years, prisoners with health conditions held in high-security prisons (known in the public sphere as “well-type” prisons) face distinct and additional health risks. These prisons are constructed to allow minimal sunlight, have limited air circulation, and consist of cells with small, tightly barred windows. These physical conditions, combined with the effects of prolonged confinement, lead to health problems such as musculoskeletal weakness, respiratory diseases, vitamin D deficiency, visual impairment, impaired sleep and cognitive function, and increased chronic pain. For this reason, many prisoners with health conditions have requested transfer to another prison on the grounds that their health is deteriorating.

Another reason for transfer requests for health reasons is the need to be close to family. The inability of family members to visit the prison due to economic conditions, old age, disability, or distance completely cuts off the communication of prisoners with health conditions with the outside world, negatively affecting the psychological and social aspects of the treatment process. Health in prison requires not only biological treatment but also the preservation of mental and social well-being.

In 2024, our association received 78 transfer requests from prisoners with health conditions, 38 of which were for health reasons. A significant portion of these requests were on grounds that appropriate treatment conditions could not be provided, that health conditions deteriorated rapidly in dungeon-type prisons, or that the need for proximity to family could not be met. However, the majority of transfers did not take place due to capacity constraints and administrative assessments prioritizing security concerns over medical necessity.

Policy Recommendation:

Requests for transfer due to health reasons should be prioritized based on medical necessity,

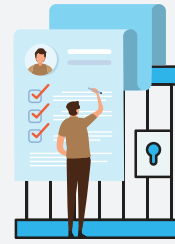
The use of ambulances should be made mandatory instead of shuttles,

Requests for the transfer of prisoners with health conditions to prisons closer to their families should be recognized and implemented within the scope of health and psychosocial well-being,

Minimum human conditions regarding light, air, and movement in high-security prisons should be brought into line with international standards.



Prisoners With Disabilities



Number of prisoners corresponded with in 2024

102

Yıllık Tematik Alan Yaka İstatistikleri
Hunger Strike and Death Fast
2



Psychosocial Services
2



Administration and Monitoring Boards' Decisions and Execution
4



Isolation
1



Prison
10



Discipline
4



Thematic
58

Transfer Request
17



Violation of Rights
8



Discrimination
3



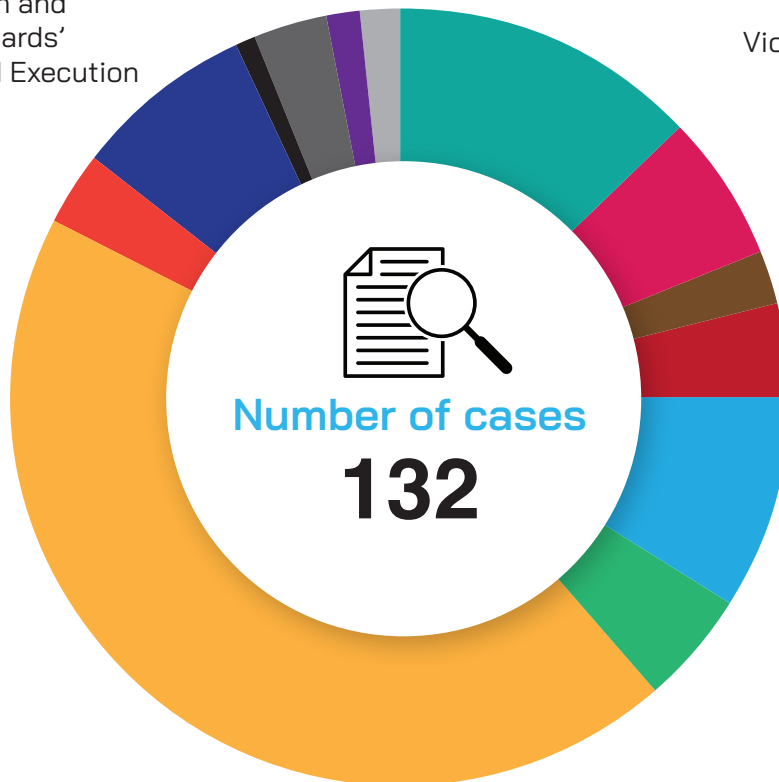
Torture and ill-treatment
5



Freedom of Expression
12



Visits
6



5. PRISONERS WITH DISABILITIES

5.1. Definition

According to legislation in Türkiye, the term disability refers to “a person with difficulties in adapting to social life and meeting daily needs, and that needs protection, care, rehabilitation, counselling and support services due to loss of physical, mental, sensory and social abilities to various extents, whether congenital or acquired”.

In the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to which Türkiye is a party, the concept of disability is defined as “persons with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”. In addition, the preamble of the Convention highlights that state parties shall recognize “that disability is an evolving concept and that disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others”. In the Convention, “the diversity of persons with disabilities” was also emphasized. When considered together with all these facts, recognizing that the concept of disability is an evolving and developing concept and not uniformizing the concept of disability is the fundamental condition to ensure the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in social life and to prevent discrimination against persons with disabilities.

In Türkiye, persons with disabilities are imprisoned in places where their needs and rights are not respected. Therefore, in prisons where the conditions of imprisonment are difficult, prisoners with disabilities are much more disadvantaged than other prisoners regarding visits, right to health and access to social activities. Prisoners with grave disabilities, who cannot maintain their lives on their own, are held in “R-Type” (meaning “Rehabilitation Type”) prisons, which are built to provide rehabilitation services. However, the capacity of these prisons is rather low compared to the general requirement and does not meet the needs of prisoners with disabilities.

5.2. General Conditions

No data on prisoners with disabilities has been shared in the statistics published by the General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Houses so far. Despite the dozens of information requests we have made so far regarding the statistics on prisoners with disabilities, no data has been shared with the public.

Most recently, on December 3, 2023, during the week of International Day of Persons with Disabilities, Member of Parliament İbrahim Yurdunuseven, speaking on behalf of a group proposal presented to the General Assembly of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (TBMM), noted that there are a total of 269 prisoners on remand and sentences with disabilities in Türkiye. MP Yurdunuseven stated, “As of today, a total of 269 prisoners with disabilities, sentenced and prisoners on remand, are housed throughout Türkiye, including 19 with language and speech impairments, 42 with visual impairments, 28 with hearing impairments and 18 with speech impairments, and 162 with orthopedic disabilities.”⁷³ TIHEK, visits various prisons and publishes its visits on its website for public information. In 2024, TIHEK visited 33 prisons and shared data on the number of prisoners with disabilities in the institutions they visited

⁷³ Grand National Assembly of Türkiye, (2023). TBMM Assembly Minutes Journal, 31st Session. <https://cdn.tbmm.gov.tr/TbmmWeb/Tutanak/28/2/31/Tam/387c521b-a109-4683-af8e-b01ab066fb65.html>

in their prison reports. When these reports are examined and the data disclosed in each institution report is compiled, it is seen that TIHEK has determined that there are a total of 285 prisoners with disabilities in 33 prisons.⁷⁴

As such, it is seen that the number of prisoners with disabilities is much higher than that stated in the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (TBMM) General Assembly. When the data stated in the TBMM General Assembly is examined, it is thought to be based on a physical disability or a very high level of sensory loss that is visible at first glance. It is also seen that this data is incomplete in that it does not include prisoners with mental and psychosocial disabilities. As stated in our reports published in previous years, various applications we made to access statistics on prisoners with disabilities and disaggregated data concerning types of disabilities and to get information about the measures taken in prisons were not answered by public authorities. The inability to access such data makes existing problems even more complicated. The unavailability of disaggregated data concerning prisoners with disabilities also poses an obstacle to solving the problems that prisoners with disabilities experience in prisons and meeting their specific needs.

Policy Recommendation:

The statistics concerning the prisoners with disabilities in Türkiye's prisons shall be kept depending on the definition in the international convention and the disaggregated data concerning the disability type/rate of the prisoners shall be open to the public.

5.3. Prominent Issues

As was the case in previous years, access to healthcare, Rehabilitation Type prisons, Forensic Medicine Institutions, accessibility, disability wage and poverty are among the main problems of prisoners with disabilities also this year.

The vast majority of rights violations experienced by prisoners with disabilities are based on discrimination.⁷⁵ However, discrimination is not always caused by behaving differently, but sometimes by behaving in the same way. While prisoners with disabilities suffer direct discrimination when they cannot use their vested rights, they suffer indirect discrimination when arrangements concerning prisoners with disabilities are not made. The physical inaccessibility of prisons, which were designed with the perception of sure-footedness of persons without disabilities, makes enjoying basic rights such as health, workshops and visits for persons with disabilities difficult. Even in prisons, which are used as one of the "low-cost labor resources" of the country, prisoners with disabilities cannot find suitable employment. Prisoners with disabilities have no source of income other than the disability pension to maintain their lives in prison.

5.3.1. Access to Healthcare Services

One of the most common complaints that our association receives is that access to healthcare is hindered due to the very long process of visiting the infirmary and then being transferred to a hospital. The failure to refer prisoners to hospitals negatively affects the situation of prisoners with disabilities who require regular treatment.

The inadequacy of the number of healthcare personnel in prison and their working hours makes it difficult for prisoners with disabilities to access regular and multiple treatments. In addition to this, prisoners with disabilities

⁷⁴ TIHEK, (2024). TIHEK Visit Reports.. <https://www.tihe.gov.tr/kategori/rapor/Ziyaret-Raporlari>

⁷⁵ Sisi, M. (2019). Conditions of detention of persons with disabilities deprived of their liberty within the framework of international and national law. Turkish Human Rights and Equality Agency Academic Journal, 2, 79-105.

are required to get the “Report from Health Committee for Persons with Disabilities” and the “Health Status Report from Health Committee”, both for the determination of their disability status and for their subsequent access to their rights. However, prisoners with disabilities often mentioned that the process of receiving these reports in 2024 was very long and that they faced many violations of rights in this process. Furthermore, our association has received complaints that their disability rates have increased since they were not provided with regular and multiple treatments they need, such as physical therapy and rehabilitation. Prisoners have complained about the lack of comprehensive health services and the severely limited access to specialized personnel for psychosocial support. Indeed, the difficulty of accessing regular and multiple treatments in prisons demonstrates that the right to life of prisoners with disabilities is not protected and poses serious risks of violation.

Policy Recommendation:

For prisoners with disabilities with chronic and multiple diseases to access regular treatment, the facilities such as necessary medical equipment, medical supplies and continuity of healthcare personnel shall be provided in all prisons, and the number and working hours of healthcare personnel shall be improved to meet the needs of the prison population. Priority should be given to hospital transfers and treatment for prisoners with disabilities.

5.3.2. R Type Prisons and the Forensic Medicine Institution

According to the information on the website of CTE, “the units established in Adana, Elazığ, Manisa and Samsun E-Type Penal Institutions and the health units in Istanbul/Metris R-Type Closed (with a capacity for 158 people) and Menemen R-Type Closed (with a capacity for 156 people) were commissioned and are operational for sentenced prisoners who have mental disorders other than lunacy.”⁷⁶ In response to our latest request for information to the Ministry of Justice regarding the number of R-Type facilities, we were informed that “The Metris R-Type Closed Penal Institution, the Menemen R-Type Closed and Open Penal Institution, and the Elazığ R-Type Closed Penal Institution have been established to accommodate, rehabilitate, and treat prisoners with severe and chronic illnesses or physical disabilities who are awaiting reports from the FMI or who are unable to care for themselves and require the care of others. The capacity of the Metris R Type Closed Penitentiary is 150; 96 of which are reserved for prisoners on remand and sentenced who require care due to serious and chronic illness or disability; 54 are reserved for prisoners on remand and sentenced accommodated under Article 18 of Law No. 5275; and the remainder are reserved for prisoners on remand and sentenced who will be employed in internal services. From its establishment on, rehabilitation and improvement efforts have been carried out for prisoners and prisoners on remand through hobby rooms and open therapy gardens established in the Rehabilitation Department of the Institution.

The Menemen R Type Closed and Open Penal Institution has a capacity of 150 and only houses prisoners on remand and sentenced who are in need of care due to severe and chronic physical illnesses and disabilities.

The Elazığ R Type Closed Penal Institution has a capacity of 150 and only houses prisoners who are in need of care due to severe and chronic physical illnesses and disabilities.”⁷⁷

In addition, according to the TIHEK 2024 report, there are 145 prisoners with health conditions in the Metris R Type Prison, while there are 4 doctors, 9 health officers, and 20 nurses working in the institution.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ <https://cte.adalet.gov.tr/Home/SayfaDetay/cik-genel-bilgi>

⁷⁷ Response from the General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Houses dated November 24, 2023, regarding our request for information.

⁷⁸ TIHEK, (2024). Report on the Visit to the Metris R Type Prison. <https://www.tihkek.gov.tr/public/images/karartlar/bc3kus.pdf>

Type R prisons are designed for prisoners with disabilities and illnesses compared to other types of prisons. However, the fact that access to regular and multiple treatment is only possible in Type R prisons prevents prisoners with disabilities in non-Type R prisons from accessing healthcare. Instead of institutions that isolate people with disabilities such as R Type, all institutions should be designed according to persons with disabilities.

Policy Recommendation:

For prisoners with disabilities to have access to healthcare, all prisons and wards shall be designed in a way to meet the specific health needs of prisoners with disabilities, instead of designing prisons that isolate persons with disabilities such as R-Type.

The report issued by the FMI is determinant for both the postponement of the execution of the sentence given to prisoners with disabilities and their transfer to R-Type prisons. FMI can issue a report as “the prisoner can stay in prison” or “the prisoner can maintain his/her life on his/her own” for the prisoners who received a “severe disability” report from the committees at full-fledged hospitals. According to the Health Regulation, while a disability rate over % 70 means “not being able to maintain life on one’s own”, there were many cases where FMI did not issue a “the prisoner cannot stay in prison” report even for prisoners with disabilities requiring complex support.

This points to uncertainties regarding the extent to which the FMI fulfills its obligation to apply scientific criteria and impartial assessment. Similarly, in order to be transferred to R-type prisons, reports from hospitals are required, as well as reports from the FMI stating that the prisoner is “fit to remain in an R-type prison.” Therefore, transfers to R-Type prisons and postponement of the execution of their sentences due to sickness are very difficult for prisoners with disabilities. In addition, some prisoners with disabilities were not released from prison on the grounds that they did not fulfill the condition of “not constituting a serious and concrete danger in terms of public security” required by Article 16 of the Law on the Execution of Sentences, although they had a “the prisoner cannot stay in prison” report issued by the FMI.

Policy Recommendation:

Alternatives to imprisonment for prisoners with disabilities should be sufficiently discussed, and alternative solutions that fully meet the need should be developed. In addition, the infrastructure should be established to ensure that the treatment processes of prisoners with serious health problems in prison are carried out in independent and transparent health institutions.

Policy Recommendation:

Article 16 of the Law on the Execution of Sentences and Security Measures shall be rearranged considering the following recommendations.

- The medical reports obtained from university hospitals and training and research hospitals shall be sufficient for the postponement of execution of the sentence without relying on the medical reports prepared by the ATK, which have disputed impartiality and do not depend on scientific facts.

- As stipulated in Mandela Rules, the processes related to clinical decisions shall be open to the participation and supervision of a commission of specialists, which has the necessary qualifications and acts with full clinical independence.
- The phrase “evaluated as not constituting a serious and concrete danger in terms of public security”, which leads to subjective evaluations, shall be annulled.

5.3.3. Accessibility

Like other institutions outside, prisons are mostly designed, both structurally and legally, for “able-bodied, adult men”. The inaccessibility of the prisons for groups such as women, children, persons with disabilities, foreign nationals, etc., who are not covered in this normative framework leads to numerous rights violations.

In addition to the inadequacy of regulations for prisoners with disabilities, it is evident that existing regulations are not fully implemented. Prisoners with disabilities, in particular, often express that they struggle to live independently due to the physical inadequacies of prisons. However, accessibility is not limited to physical conditions; it must also be evaluated in terms of rights such as visiting, telephone, letter, and petition rights, as well as workshop activities.

Furthermore, the requirement by prison administrations that prisoners submit all requests in writing (via petition) creates a prison-specific accessibility problem. This is because there are prisoners who cannot write due to physical or mental disabilities, as well as prisoners who have not had access to education and are illiterate due to these disabilities. Therefore, they are forced to submit their written requests through other prisoners instead of themselves for matters such as shopping, communicating with the outside world, or going to the hospital.

Policy Recommendation:

The rights of prisoners with disabilities to live independently and to personal mobility must be ensured.

The structure, rules, and services of the prison should be organized to meet the needs of persons with disabilities, and these services should not become a burden on other prisoners.

All rules and services should be arranged in such a way that every person with disabilities can make an individual application and carry out the entire process on their own, and prisons should be made fully accessible for all types of disabilities.

As we have stated in our previous reports, many structural factors, such as toilets, bathrooms, crowded ward, narrow passages, buildings and rooms with multiple floors or stairs mean that prisoners with disabilities cannot access their most basic needs. However, the inaccessibility of prisons for persons with disabilities adversely affects not only prisoners with disabilities, but also their families who might also have disabilities, lawyers with disabilities, and public servants working in the prison. For a prisoner with disabilities, the rights violations begin when getting on the shuttle vehicle. The shuttle vehicles are not suitable for disabilities, sick and old prisoners in terms of step heights, seating, lighting, ventilation, etc. In some shuttle vehicles, the slopes of the ramps that allow prisoners with orthopedic disabilities to get on the vehicle are not suitable. In addition, the procedure implemented during admission to prison is not arranged in favor of people with disabilities. Prisoners who use wheelchairs or crutches encounter various difficulties when passing through X-ray machines.

Access to visitation rights is more difficult for prisoners with disabilities than for other prisoners. Communication can be even more difficult for prisoners with disabilities and their relatives. In 2024, many prisoners with disabilities were able to communicate with the outside world through open and closed visits and telephone rights.

Workshops organized for persons with disabilities are quite limited, and prisoners with disabilities face significant difficulties in accessing education and workshops because no accommodation is made for them.

Policy Recommendation:

The contact and non-contact visits and access to workshops and training shall be designed according to the disability types of prisoners with disabilities, and alternative rights and facilities shall be provided for the hearing impaired to benefit from phone calls and the visually-impaired to benefit from the right to non-contact visits and the right to participate in workshops.

Most of the transfers of prisoners, who wanted to be transferred to prisons closer to their families or more suitable for their or their visitors' disabilities have not been granted. Consequently, visits with their families have become more difficult for prisoners with disabilities or prisoners with family members who have disabilities compared to other prisoner groups, and transfer requests from prisoners with disabilities have not been evaluated with consideration for their special needs. Intercity travel is very difficult for the relatives of sick, elderly and prisoners with disabilities, and the physical conditions of the prison also pose difficulties for visitors as well as prisoners with disabilities. Under these circumstances, not fulfilling the transfer requests of prisoners who serve their sentences in prisons far from their kin who might have disabilities amounts to a de facto annulment of the right to meet with their families.

Policy Recommendation:

Prisoners or visitors with disabilities should be transferred to prisons suitable for disability access and close to the places where their visitors reside.

5.3.4. Disability Pension

Access of prisoners with disabilities to disability pensions is very difficult due to reasons such as failing to meet the requirement of guardian signature, place of residence problems, failing to meet the destituteness criterion, and failing to get the disability report. The problems experienced by prisoners with disabilities in receiving disability pension continue.

In order for prisoners to apply for disability pension provided by Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations (SYDV), they must have a disability report and go to the SYDV in the region where the prisoner resides to complete the application process. Due to the lack of hospital referrals, many prisoners with disabilities could not get a disability report, prisoners with disabilities who did not have communication with their guardians or who served their execution in distant cities could not get a pension due to reasons such as the lack of a guardian's signature.

In 2024, we received many complaints that the Postal Services had also begun to discriminate between sentenced prisoners and prisoners on remand among prisoners with disabilities. While a prisoner with disabilities on remand can have the money withdrawn by the prison administrator if communication with their guardian cannot be established, the Postal Services has refused to grant this right to prisoners with disabilities who are sentenced. It is evident that

the already limited rights of persons with disabilities cannot be effectively exercised or are effectively eliminated due to all these bureaucratic processes in prison. Not only are employment and workshop opportunities not created for prisoners with disabilities, but the application process for disability pensions is also becoming increasingly difficult.

Policy Recommendation:

The application process for the disability pensions from Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations shall be arranged according to the accessibility needs of prisoners with disabilities, the application procedure for disability pensions shall be simplified, and an arrangement shall be made allowing the prisoners with disabilities to withdraw their disability pensions from Postal Services through the prison trustee without any discrimination between sentenced prisoners and prisoners on remand.

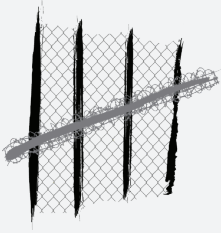
5.3.5. Poverty of Persons with Disabilities

Some disease and disability types have special diets and other medical needs. Most of the prisoners with disabilities who applied to our association in 2024 noted that these needs were not met by the prison administration and that they did not have the economic means to meet these needs. Prisoners with disabilities, who cannot access basic needs such as food, medical and cleaning supplies free of charge, are among the groups of prisoners who feel the increasing economic crisis most deeply in prisons.

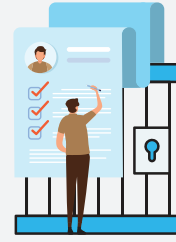
One of the most common complaints we received in 2024 concerned products not covered by the prison administration and the SSI. Many of the prisoners with disabilities who tried to obtain these materials from the internal and external canteen were unable to access even their most basic requirements due to high costs. The problems experienced when obtaining disability pensions, as well as not providing workshop, employment and training opportunities for prisoners with disabilities, deepen the poverty of prisoners with disabilities further. Poverty of people with disabilities in prisons is not an individual case, but a rather critical problem that needs to be intervened immediately.

Policy Recommendation:

The basic needs of prisoners with disabilities such as food, medical supplies and cleaning materials shall be paid for by the prison administration and SSI, and employment opportunities shall be provided in prisons for prisoners with disabilities.



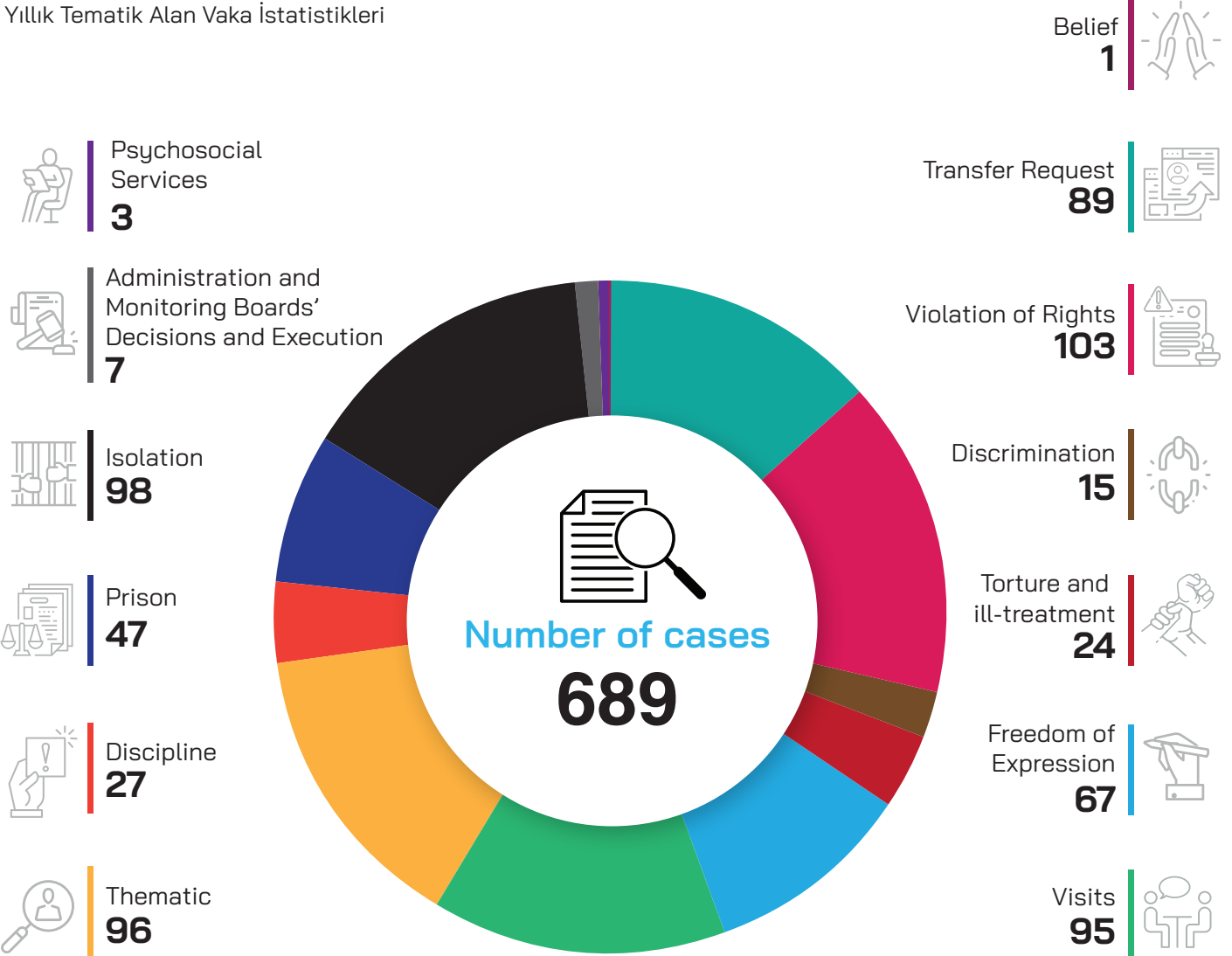
Aggravated Life Sentence Prisoners



Number of prisoners corresponded with in 2024

109

Yıllık Tematik Alan Vaka İstatistikleri



6. AGGRAVATED LIFE SENTENCE PRISONERS

6.1. Definition

An aggravated life sentence is a form of imprisonment introduced in Türkiye in 2002 following the abolition of capital punishment and it is the most severe sentence that can be imposed on a person under the laws of the Republic of Türkiye. This enforcement regime is regulated by the Law on the Execution of Penalties and Security Measures, which came into force on December 29, 2004, and contains extremely restrictive provisions and, in this respect, is sharply distinguished from all other forms of imprisonment. Under this regime, prisoners sentenced to aggravated life imprisonment for criminal offenses are eligible for parole after 30 years, while those sentenced for organized crimes are eligible after 36 years. However, there is no possibility of release for political prisoners sentenced to aggravated life imprisonment under the Anti-Terrorism Law. These prisoners are effectively held in prison for the rest of their lives. The conditions of the aggravated life sentence regime are determined in accordance with Article 25 of Law No. 5275 on the Execution of Penalties and Security Measures, dated December 13, 2004, and Article 47 of the Bylaw on the Administration of Penal Institutions and Execution of Sentences and Security Measures.⁷⁹ According to these regulations, prisoners serving aggravated life sentences spend 20 to 23 hours of their day in single cells measuring approximately 7 to 8 square meters, completely deprived of meaningful social contact. With their rights to visits, telephone calls, social activities, and work also severely restricted, it can be said that these prisoners are subject to what can only be described as an “exceptional enforcement regime.”

6.2. General Conditions

Prisoners serving aggravated life sentences continued to struggle to survive under conditions of isolation in 2024. New regulations implemented by S, Y, and High Security prisons, which began operating in 2021, had the greatest physical, social, and psychological impact on these prisoners. Furthermore, the deepening economic crisis in 2024 generally worsened living conditions in prisons, and prisoners serving aggravated life sentences have been more negatively affected by this situation economically and socially.

The new rules introduced in S, Y, and High Security prisons that were opened in 2021 have caused these prisoners to live in even harsher physical, social, and psychological conditions. In addition, the deepening economic crisis in 2024 has made life in prisons even more difficult, affecting prisoners serving aggravated life sentences more than other prisoners economically and socially.

The most recent official data shared with the public regarding the number of prisoners serving aggravated life sentences in Türkiye's prisons is the response provided by the CTE to our association's applications for the right to information on February 21, 2014. According to this response, there are “a total of 1,453 prisoners, including 126 for terrorism and organized crime and 1,327 for criminal offenses.” Despite the passage of time, no updated statistics on this issue were shared in 2024. In the data submitted by the Ministry of Justice to the Council of Europe's Annual Penal Statistics (SPACE) reports, life imprisonment and aggravated life imprisonment sentences are reported together, and no separate information is provided on the number of prisoners serving aggravated life sentences.

⁷⁹ <https://mevzuat.gov.tr/mevzuat?MevzuatNo=5275&MevzuatTur=1&MevzuatTertip=5>. Accessed on 15.11.2025.

However, at the 80th Session of the Committee Against Torture held in Geneva on July 16-18, 2024, Fatih Güngör, Deputy Director General of Prisons and Detention Houses, stated that prisoners serving aggravated life sentences constitute 1.24% of the prison population.⁸⁰ As the total prison population was announced as 350,670 at the session, this rate corresponds to approximately 4,348 prisoners. Following this session, the UN Committee Against Torture published its report on Türkiye. In its 5th Periodic Report on Türkiye in 2024, the Committee expressed serious concern that the aggravated life sentence effectively constitutes a regime of isolation and recommended that this sentence be abolished.⁸¹

6.3. Prominent Issues

In 2024, prisoners sentenced to aggravated life imprisonment continued to experience serious health problems due to the isolation-based enforcement regime; they struggled with economic hardship because they were not allowed to work in prison and tried to cope with the negative psychological and physical effects of isolation.

Many prisoners informed our association that they spent 22-23 hours a day in their cells, were unable to exercise during the limited ventilation period, were struggling financially, and that all these conditions were negatively affecting their overall health. One of the most prominent issues throughout 2024 has been the severe isolation conditions imposed by S, Y, and High Security prisons. The majority of the problems experienced by prisoners serving aggravated life sentences stem directly from the legislation that determines this regime of punishment.

These rights violations are detailed in the section of the report titled “Violations Stemming from Legislation”; the complaints frequently conveyed to our association by prisoners during 2024 are addressed in the following sections.

6.3.1. Violations Stemming from Legislation

An “exceptional enforcement regime” has been defined for aggravated life imprisonment, and this exceptional nature manifests itself in two fundamental elements. The first of these is the conditions of enforcement. According to Article 9 of the Enforcement Law, aggravated life sentences are enforced in high-security prisons. In addition, there is a special law that regulates only the enforcement of aggravated life sentences. Article 25 of the Enforcement Law determines the conditions of the enforcement regime for this sentence. This regulation imposes serious restrictions on the fundamental rights granted to prisoners and creates a second prison environment based on extraordinary conditions for prisoners serving aggravated life sentences.

According to the Regulation on Visits to Sentenced and Remand Prisoners, “no one other than their spouses, children, grandchildren, grandchildren’s children, mothers, fathers, grandmothers, grandfathers, parents of grandmothers and grandfathers, siblings, and guardians can visit prisoners sentenced to aggravated life imprisonment.”⁸²

Policy Recommendation:

The necessary legal arrangements should be made to ensure that aggravated life prisoners can meet with their family members in both open and closed visits.

⁸⁰ The United Nations Office at Geneva, (2024). Experts of the Committee against Torture Commend Türkiye on its Strong Commitment to Fight Violence against Women, Ask about Life Sentences in Prison and the Communication of Detainees with Family Members.

<https://www.ungeneva.org/en/news-media/meeting-summary/2024/07/examen-de-la-turkiye-au-comite-contre-la-torture-les-experts-du>

⁸¹ United Nations Human Rights Treaties Bodies, (2024). Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolNo=CAT%2FC%2FTUR%2FCO%2F5&Lang=en

⁸² Presidential Legislation Information System, (2005). Regulation on Visits to Sentenced Prisoners on Remand <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/mevzuat?MevzuatNo=8345&MevzuatTur=7&MevzuatTertip=5>

According to Article 25 of the Law on the Execution of Sentences, “The sentenced prisoners can be visited by their spouses, descendants and ascendants, siblings and guardians on the specified day and hour and according to specified conditions, at intervals of fifteen days and for a period of maximum one hour a day.” and “The sentenced prisoners can make phone calls to the persons identified in paragraph (f) for a period of maximum ten minutes and for once in fifteen days.”⁸³ According to this, aggravated life sentence prisoners do not have the right to weekly visits and phone calls like other prisoners. They are only allowed to call and visit every 15 days. This weakens the relations of prisoners with the outside world and prevents them from meeting their needs.

The right to video calls granted to prisoners with Regulation No. 2324 published on March 29, 2020, was not extended to aggravated life sentence prisoners.⁸⁴ Article 74 of the regulation states that aggravated life prisoners may only make voice calls to their spouse, descendants, ascendants, siblings, and guardian once every 15 days for no more than ten minutes, in cases deemed appropriate by the administration and observation board. These prisoners are deprived of the right to video calls.

Policy Recommendation:

Aggravated life prisoners should be granted the right to weekly telephone calls, open and closed visits, and video calls, just like other prisoners.

According to Article 5 of the Regulation on Compassionate Leaves to be Granted to Sentenced Prisoners and Prisoners on Remand Due to the Death or Sickness of Their Kin, those sentenced to aggravated life imprisonment are not allowed to attend funerals under compassionate leave for security reasons.⁸⁵ In 2024, aggravated life prisoners whose family members passed away were unable to attend funerals, as in previous years. This situation has led to negative psychological effects on prisoners who lost their family members.

Policy Recommendation:

The necessary legal arrangements should be made to allow aggravated life prisoners who have lost family members to attend the funerals of their relatives.

According to the enforcement regime of the aggravated life sentence, “the enforcement of the prisoner’s sentence cannot be suspended under any circumstances.” In accordance with this provision, all health measures and medical procedures to be applied to prisoners serving aggravated life sentences are carried out primarily in penal institutions; if this is not possible, they are carried out in single-person, high-security prisoner wards in fully equipped state or university hospitals. Therefore, even if these prisoners are treated outside the institution, they remain in single rooms and are not eligible for a suspension of sentence execution.

This situation has led to the deterioration of the health conditions and deaths of prisoners serving aggravated life sentences, particularly those who are seriously ill, in 2024.⁸⁶

⁸³ Presidential Legislation Information System, (2004). Law on the Enforcement of Criminal Penalties and Security Measures <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/mevzuat?MevzuatNo=5275&MevzuatTur=1&MevzuatTertip=5>

⁸⁴ Presidential Legislation Information System, (2020). Regulation on the Administration of Penal Institutions and Execution of Sentences and Security Measures <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/mevzuat?MevzuatNo=2324&MevzuatTur=21&MevzuatTertip=5>

⁸⁵ Presidential Legislation Information System, (2013). Regulation on Compassionate Leaves to be Granted to Sentenced Prisoners and Prisoners on Remand Due to the Death or Sickness of Their Kin. <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/mevzuat?MevzuatNo=18525&MevzuatTur=7&MevzuatTertip=5>

⁸⁶ Human Rights Association, (2024). Prisoner Abdulkadir Kuday, who was ill, has passed away. <https://www.ihd.org.tr/hasta-mahpus-abdulkadir-kuday-hayatini-kaybetti/>

Policy Recommendation:

In order for prisoners serving aggravated life sentences to benefit from the right to a stay of execution, the provision in the execution law stating that “the execution of the prisoner’s sentence cannot be suspended under any circumstances” should be removed.

According to the enforcement regime for aggravated life imprisonment, prisoners may participate in an art or vocational activity if the institution where they are held has the facilities and if the administration and observation board deem it appropriate. However, this participation is at the discretion of the prison administration. Under the same regime, prisoners serving aggravated life sentences cannot participate in any sports or rehabilitation activities other than those specified in the institution’s internal regulations. This situation prevents prisoners from meaningfully benefiting from sports and rehabilitation activities.

Policy Recommendation:

The participation of prisoners serving aggravated life sentences in social activities should be increased, and internal regulations should be shared with the public to prevent differences in practices among prisons.

According to Article 25 of Law No. 5275, prisoners serving aggravated life sentences cannot be employed outside the institution under any circumstances and are not permitted to work. This situation eliminates the possibility for prisoners to work in different fields and earn income, thus causing many prisoners serving aggravated life sentences to face serious economic hardship and difficulty in meeting their basic needs.

Policy Recommendation:

The rights of prisoners sentenced to aggravated life imprisonment who wish to work to participate in vocational training and education programs should be legally guaranteed, and the wages they receive in exchange for their work should be improved.

The second reason why aggravated life imprisonment is an “exceptional enforcement regime” is related to the length of the imprisonment period. According to Article 47 of the Penal Code, aggravated life imprisonment continues for the life of the prisoner and is enforced according to the strict security regime specified by law and regulations issued by the President.

However, the right to conditional release is regulated under Article 107 of the Enforcement Law, and aggravated life imprisonment is defined in two different ways. In this context, prisoners who have committed crimes by establishing or managing an organization or crimes committed within the framework of organizational activities can benefit from conditional release after serving 30 years (107/2) or 36 years (107/4). Completing these terms does not mean immediate release; it only creates the hope of release. For this reason, this punishment is defined in the literature as “aggravated life imprisonment with the hope of release.”

On the other hand, the Enforcement Law also defines aggravated life imprisonment without the right to parole. Accordingly, persons sentenced for crimes committed within the framework of an organization’s activities, particularly crimes against state security, crimes against the constitutional order, or crimes against national defense, are not

eligible for parole provisions (107/16)⁸⁷. In line with this regulation, prisoners sentenced to this measure must remain in prison until their death. A similar regulation is also found in Article 17 of the Anti-Terrorism Law No. 3713, which stipulates that terrorists whose death penalty has been commuted to aggravated life imprisonment are not eligible for parole.⁸⁸

The view that every prisoner should have the possibility of regaining their freedom, even in cases of life imprisonment, is referred to as the “right to hope.” This right was addressed by various bodies of the Council of Europe even before the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights. The Council of Europe’s Committee of Ministers and the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) have emphasized that individuals sentenced to life imprisonment should have the possibility of early release; they have clearly stated that prisoners should be able to engage in meaningful work in prisons to facilitate their adaptation to the outside world and prepare them for life after release. Despite these decisions, the right to hope is still not being implemented in Türkiye, and prisoners continue to convey their complaints on this matter to our association.

Policy Recommendation:

The right to hope should also be granted to prisoners serving aggravated life sentences who do not currently have this right.

6.3.2. Isolation

The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) has emphasized that solitary confinement and cell confinement violate human rights and has stated that these practices can have negative effects on individuals’ mental, physical, and social health. Similarly, scientific research has also shown that solitary confinement seriously affects human health.

The areas accessible to prisoners serving aggravated life sentences during their term of imprisonment are generally limited to their cells, ventilation areas, and visiting rooms. The cramped nature of their cells, the shared use of toilets and bathrooms, the damp and airless conditions of the cells, and the fact that they spend 22–23 hours a day in this environment cause both physiological and psychological problems for prisoners.

In 2024, most prisoners serving aggravated life sentences stated that their cells were 10-12 square meters, and that the small size of the windows and the wire mesh covering them caused the cells to be stuffy and damp. In the same year, some prisoners who removed the wire mesh to get fresh air were given disciplinary penalties and administrative investigations were launched.

One of the most frequently raised issues by prisoners serving aggravated life sentences in 2024 was the harsh conditions of isolation. Numerous complaints were received from these prisoners, particularly regarding the harsh isolation practices in the S, Y, and High Security prisons that began operating in 2021.

Prisoners stated that they were taken out for ventilation alone, that they were taken to separate sections for ventilation, that they were subjected to detailed body searches several times while being taken to ventilation, that they could not participate in workshops and courses, that they could not benefit from their right to conversation, and that they were hardly ever taken out for sports or, when they were, they were not taken out with the prisoners of their choice. They also stated that the windows were designed to block sunlight, that the window fronts were covered with wire mesh, and that they were therefore deprived of fresh air and daylight and could not see the sky.

⁸⁷ Presidential Legislation Information System, (2004). Enforcement of Criminal Penalties and Security Measures Law on the Subject. <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/mevzuat?MevzuatNo=5275&MevzuatTur=1&MevzuatTertip=5>

⁸⁸ Presidential Legislation Information System, (1991). Anti-Terrorism Law. <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/mevzuat?MevzuatNo=3713&MevzuatTur=1&MevzuatTertip=5>

However, daylight and fresh air are basic elements of life that every prisoner has the right to access. The absence of these elements leads to an increase in health problems and creates conditions conducive to the spread of disease. Covering the windows with wire mesh demonstrates interference with the prisoners' basic needs.

In addition, according to the CPT, high-risk prisoners in particular should be subject to a relatively more relaxed program within the confines of the supervision unit, even if they are under strict supervision, and should be able to meet with other prisoners in the unit and have access to different options for activities. However, the current isolation conditions applied to prisoners serving aggravated life sentences are inconsistent with the CPT's recommendations.

Policy Recommendation:

The practice of holding prisoners serving aggravated life sentences in single-person cells should be discontinued.

Policy Recommendation:

The wire mesh covering the windows of cells should be removed to ensure that every prisoner has access to fresh air and daylight.

6.3.3. Torture and ill-Treatment

In 2024, many prisoners serving aggravated life sentences complained of being subjected to physical and psychological violence. The complaints received stated that prison administrators and guards arbitrarily used violence against prisoners, that prisoners were not taken to hospital after such violence, and that arbitrary disciplinary punishments were imposed.

In terms of psychological violence, some prisoners serving aggravated life sentences reported that prison guards humiliated them and made threats against them and their relatives.

In addition to allegations of physical violence, many prisoners serving aggravated life sentences reported being subjected to oral cavity searches during hospital transfers, being searched when going to and returning from recreation, having their belongings scattered during cell searches, and having some of their belongings damaged.

Particularly in S, Y, and High Security prisons, prisoners serving aggravated life sentences for different types of crimes were held in cells in the same corridor and taken out for visits together. The requests of prisoners who filed complaints about this situation were rejected, and some prisoners reported to our association that they were uncomfortable with this practice for security reasons.

6.3.4. Access to Healthcare Services

Prisoners serving aggravated life sentences who are held in isolation for long periods face serious physical and mental health problems due to the unsanitary conditions in prisons and spending most of the day in their cells. This situation further negatively affects the health of prisoners with chronic illnesses in particular and, in some cases, causes their illnesses to progress. Furthermore, constant isolation and inadequate hygiene conditions lower the overall quality of life for prisoners and can cause significant psychological stress and anxiety.

Some prisoners serving aggravated life sentences who applied to our association in 2024 stated that they suffered from chronic health problems due to their long stay in prison and cell conditions, and that their inability to receive regular treatment further worsened their health. Prisoners stated that they experienced physiological health problems such as respiratory diseases, cardiac disorders, and eye problems due to the airless conditions and small size of the cells.

In addition to physical health problems, living under severe isolation can also have serious psychological effects on prisoners. These effects can include disorders such as cognitive and perceptual impairments, anxiety, depression, paranoia, psychosis, self-harming behaviors, and suicidal thoughts. Furthermore, various psychosomatic illnesses may arise, primarily stress-related stomach and digestive problems.

One of the most significant factors hindering hygiene is kitchen and toilet areas being located together in the cells of prisoners serving aggravated life sentences, forcing them to meet their eating, washing up, and toilet needs in the same place. Furthermore, limited ventilation hours and tightly woven wire mesh added to cell windows prevent prisoners from getting fresh air. Many prisoners have reported to our association that their cells are stuffy and moldy.

The water quota system implemented in some prisons has made it difficult for prisoners with health problems to meet their hygiene needs. During the winter months, some prisoners have stated that prisons are not sufficiently heated, that the heaters are not turned up high enough, and that they are therefore cold. Prisoners with respiratory problems have reported to our association that they are struggling due to the dampness and small size of the cells, that they have requested transfers for health reasons, but that their requests have been rejected.

Policy Recommendation:

The cell conditions of prisoners serving aggravated life sentences should be improved, kitchens, toilets, and living areas should be separated, ventilation periods should be increased, and the wire mesh on the windows should be removed. In addition, water and heating facilities should be brought up to an adequate level to ensure that prisoners can safely meet their hygiene and basic living needs.

6.3.5. Economic Difficulties

Prisoners serving aggravated life sentences are among the most economically vulnerable prisoner groups due to being held in isolation for many years and not being allowed to work in prison. In 2024, as in previous years, prisoners applied to our association due to the economic difficulties they experienced.

Prisoners stated that the high cost of sending letters made it difficult for them to communicate with their relatives. They also stated that the amount of food provided is insufficient, that they are not getting enough to eat, and that they cannot afford to buy additional food for economic reasons. It has also been reported that parcels sent by their relatives do not reach prisoners because the items are sold in the canteen or because the prison administration limits the acceptance of parcels to once a month or on specific dates, forcing prisoners to buy items from the canteen.

Economic problems also prevent prisoners, especially those held in prisons far from their families, from having family visits. Many prisoners' relatives were unable to visit due to travel and accommodation costs, which has been

psychologically challenging for prisoners serving aggravated life sentences. Some prisoners who wanted to be transferred closer to their families reported that they did not apply for transfer because they could not afford the transfer fee.

Policy Recommendation:

Mailing fees should be reduced to facilitate communication between prisoners and their relatives and should be regulated in a way that does not prevent prisoners with limited financial means from exercising their right to communication.

Policy Recommendation:

Packages sent to prisoners should be delivered to them without any restrictions or delays; canteen prices should be regulated in a way that does not prevent prisoners from meeting their basic needs.

6.3.6. Socialization and Communication with the Outside World

Prisoners serving aggravated life sentences will face restrictions on letters and visits throughout 2024, as well as they have also reported being subject to practices such as not receiving left-wing newspapers and magazines or receiving them late via , restrictions on the number of books and magazines, limited television channels, and confiscation of their radios, publications, and their own writings during cell searches.

The increase in the cost of sending letters, which largely enables prisoners serving aggravated life sentences to communicate with the outside world, has created both an economic and psychological burden, especially for prisoners with insufficient financial means. In addition, many prisoners incarcerated far from their families have experienced serious difficulties in attending family visits due to their families' financial constraints and inability to cover travel expenses.

Following the earthquake centered in Kahramanmaraş on February 6, 2023, prisoners in the earthquake zone were transferred to different prisons, sending many prisoners far from their families. In 2024, the transferred prisoners were again transferred to prisons closer to their families.

Although prisoners began video calls with their families in prisons as of 2021, prisoners serving aggravated life sentences were unable to benefit from this right. In 2024, many prisoners applied to the relevant institutions, stating that this practice violated the principle of equality in the Constitution, and used the appeal mechanisms.

The economic crisis has seriously negatively affected life-sentenced prisoners held in prisons far from their families, whose transfer requests have not been accepted, and their relatives.

Policy Recommendation:

In order to ensure equal treatment of prisoners serving aggravated life sentences, they should be allowed to have weekly visits like other prisoners, the restriction on first-degree relatives should be lifted, and they should be allowed to visit three friends of their choice like other prisoners. Until these regulations are implemented, life sentence prisoners should be held in prisons close to their families to ensure they can maintain contact with the outside world.

Aggravated life prisoners, who have already been in isolation for years, have fewer socialization possibilities than the other prisoner groups. This situation has a negative psychological and social impact on aggravated life prisoners. The restrictions imposed in prisons during the pandemic continued largely throughout 2024, further reducing the already limited communication and socialization opportunities for prisoners serving aggravated life sentences.

In particular, in the S, Y, and High Security prisons that became operational in 2021, the participation of prisoners serving aggravated life sentences in social activities has been even more restricted than in previous years. These prisons largely consist of single cells, and prisoners are almost completely prevented from seeing each other, chatting, or participating in joint activities. Many prisoners have stated that they spend almost their entire day alone.

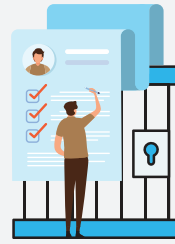
Prisoners have also stated that they are taken to a separate area for ventilation, that they are taken out for ventilation alone, that they are unable to exercise their right to conversation, and that they encounter various obstacles in accessing the library. Prisoners have also stated that they are not taken out for sports activities during open visit weeks and that this further restricts their physical activities. These issues were communicated to us through letters sent to our association, helpline conversations, and lawyer visits.

Policy Recommendation:

The participation of prisoners serving aggravated life sentences in social activities should not be left to the initiative of prison administrations; legal and administrative regulations should be established to expand the existing rights of prisoners in this regard.



Student Prisoners



Number of prisoners corresponded with in 2024

55

Yıllık Temmuzun Stakel ve İstatistikleri
and Death Fast
-



Psychosocial Services
-

Transfer Request
6



Administration and Monitoring Boards' Decisions and Execution
-

Violation of Rights
5



Isolation
3

Discrimination
4



Prison
5

Torture and ill-treatment
5



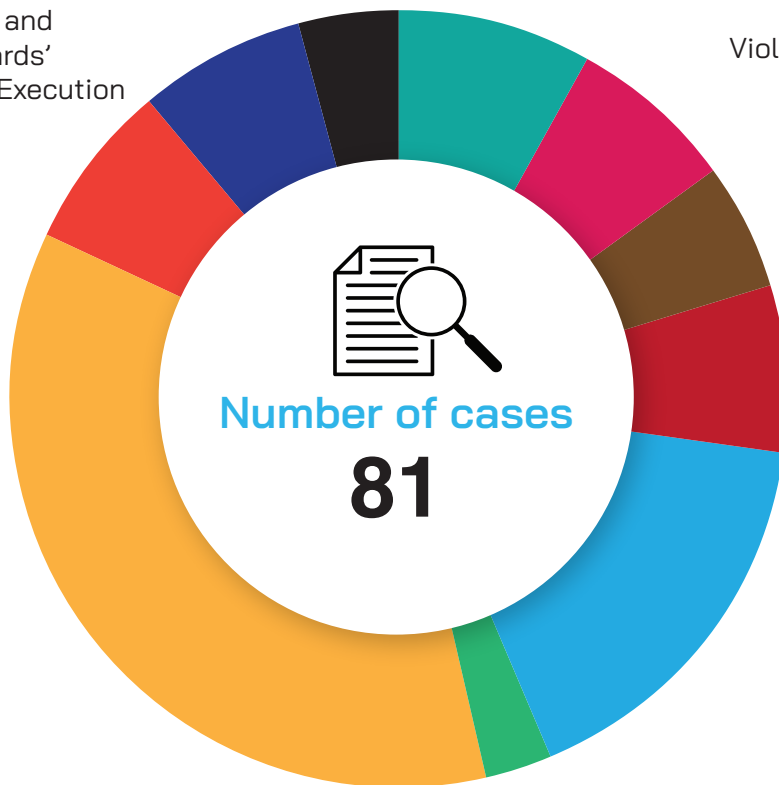
Discipline
5

Freedom of Expression
12



Thematic
26

Visits
2



7. STUDENT PRISONERS

7.1. Definition

Students in prison are the prisoners who had to discontinue their education at some point and want to continue their education. Prisoners who want to continue their education have numerous special needs, particularly access to information and educational materials about this matter, the provision of suitable studying conditions, and the need for information about university examination, school choice and enrolment processes. The university boards must make an admission decision for the prisoners to be admitted to universities providing formal education. There is no public information about the universities that admit prisoners and those that do not admit prisoners. Prisoners who do not want to experience any loss of rights due to the uncertainty created by this situation mostly prefer to participate in informal education. The economic needs required by all these processes and the difficulties stemming from these needs complicate education for prisoners, who mostly do not have any income other than the economic support of their families.

7.2. General Conditions

According to the minutes of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye Human Rights Investigation Commission meeting held on June 12, 2024, until that date 65,969 of the 337,760 prisoners are continuing their education while in prison. According to the minutes of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye General Assembly meeting held on December 10, 2024, as of that date, 70,014 of the 384,216 prisoners were able to continue their education while in prison. In addition, the minutes of the parliament dated May 8, 2024, state that 1,269 prisoners are pursuing a bachelor's degree, 61 a master's degree, 21 a doctorate, 38 an associate degree through distance learning, 91 a bachelor's degree through distance learning, 1,550 are enrolled in vocational training centers for justice, and 237 are enrolled in multi-program high schools.⁸⁹ While this situation indicates a significant population increase in Türkiye's prisons, it also shows that the number of prisoners continuing their education has decreased proportionally. In other words, although the absolute number increases towards the end of the year, participation in education has decreased in relation to the total prison population.

7.3. Prominent Issues

As of the 2023-2024 academic year, in line with the instructions sent by the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) to universities, universities have begun to reject requests from students in closed prisons to continue their formal education. Although the drafts of the 8th and 9th Judicial Packages, which came to the agenda in 2024, included provisions regarding the right to education, these regulations were removed from the text and not enacted into law. With Law No. 7532, the right to education of prisoners was brought back to the agenda, and the relevant regulations were enacted into law with their publication in the Official Gazette on November 27, 2024.⁹⁰ As a result of the amendment made by Law No. 7532, the participation of prisoners in closed prisons in formal education is limited to in-institution programs. In-institution education consists of activities aimed at supporting the personal, academic, social, and professional development of prisoners. With this amendment, participation in formal education outside the institution has been removed, and the right to education is provided based on the capacity and security conditions of the institution. Providing education based on institutional capacity increases the risk of limiting prisoners' right

⁸⁹ Grand National Assembly of Türkiye Women's and Men's Equality Commission Minutes Journal, (2024). <https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/Tutanaklar/TutanakGoster/3252>

⁹⁰ Official Gazette, (2024). Law. Law Amending the Notary Public Law and Certain Other Laws. <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2024/11/20241127-5.htm>

to education. According to the amendment, prisoners held in open prisons will be able to benefit from all types of education. However, the right to education may be denied in cases of failure in courses, absenteeism, acts requiring disciplinary penalties under the execution law, or if the university is not compatible with the prison's operation. Similarly, education may be restricted if the university is deemed unsuitable due to factors such as its compatibility with prison operations, distance, limited public transportation, and class hours not coinciding with prison entry and exit times. Indeed, before the relevant legal changes were made, prisoners held in open prisons applied to CISST, stating that their right to education had been denied by prison administrations on grounds such as failure in their studies or insufficient public transportation.

In 2024, there has been an increase in the applications of prisoners to CISST regarding the crowd of prisons, the lack of special areas for studying, the problems they experience regarding exams, enrolments and lessons as a result of their limited access to information, and the obstacles they face in participating in formal education.

7.3.1. Access to Educational Materials

Access to educational materials is delayed since the distribution of educational books sent to prisoners by their kin via courier takes a long time due to reasons such as the increase in the prisoner population and insufficient personnel. Since the course materials of the Open Education Faculty are in digital format, prisoners need to access the printouts of these materials. The families of the prisoners can send these printouts via courier, or the prisoners can print these materials from the computer of the prison education unit for a fee. Access to the printouts sent by families via courier may be delayed due to the prolonged supervision and distribution processes in prison. Getting the printouts from the education unit of the prison is not easy due to the overcrowding of these units when there is more than one student prisoner in the prison. These factors made it difficult for student prisoners to access educational materials in 2024.

With the campaign initiated by CISST in 2023,⁹¹ Erzurum Atatürk University and Eskisehir Anadolu University were called and asked to send printed course materials free of charge to the imprisoned students registered within their own bodies. In 2024, an official meeting was held with the Higher Education Council to inform them about the campaign and share the campaign text.

Policy Recommendation:

With a common effort to be carried out by the Open Education Faculties, the Council of Higher Education, and the Ministry of Justice, the course sources shall be provided free of charge for prisoners who are students of open education faculties.

Should they want to provide them, these sources may be subject to the book quota limit and the restrictions imposed on access to periodical/non-periodical publications. Postgraduate students may experience obstacles during the processes of receipt, inspection, and distribution of the academic materials sent from outside for their dissertation research. If these materials are in English, their admission to prison may be more complicated.

⁹¹ CISST, (2023). Joint Press Releases. Prisoners should be provided with free printed educational materials. <https://cisst.org.tr/mahpuslara-ders-materyalleri-ucretsiz-ve-basili-olarak-saglanmatidir-2/>

Policy Recommendation:

Graduate and postgraduate students shall be allowed to meet periodically with their academic supervisors and jury members concerning their academic studies, and the books and articles they need for their research shall be excluded from the book quota.

Prisoners who are interested in art, for example, who draw comics, are not provided with the materials they need, such as rulers. Requests for musical instruments or the materials required for tuning instruments may be rejected in defiance of the regulation that specifies the instruments that can be present in prisons.

7.3.2. Studying Conditions

The unresolved structural problems of prisons adversely affected the studying conditions of prisoners in 2024 as well, as was the case every year. Prisons do not have any sections designated for prisoners to study. The use of the library by prisoners is limited to selecting books from the book list handed out to them. Therefore, prisoners study in their wards. When there are multiple prisoners in a room or ward, there are not enough tables for them to study, and requests for additional tables are not accepted.

Crowded, noisy, and insufficiently lit wards may prevent the prisoners from studying. The daily life routines of the prisoners, who prefer to study at night when everyone is asleep to overcome the above-mentioned obstacles, may be disrupted. The only learning method for prisoners, who do not have the opportunity to listen, read, speak, practice, develop skills, and receive feedback during the learning process, has been reading the course materials also this year, as was the case in previous years. This circumstance has made the learning process of the prisoners even more complicated.

Policy Recommendation:

Suitable, independent, ventilated, and adequately illuminated sections where the prisoners can study shall be formed in prisons, and the prisoners shall be provided with the opportunity to use libraries and examine the resources directly at certain intervals.

Policy Recommendation:

A more active learning process shall be developed in prisons through cooperation between universities and prisons, and the necessary conditions shall be created to allow the prisoners to ask questions at certain intervals about subjects they could not understand while studying.

7.3.3. University Examinations, School Choice and Enrollment Processes

Generally, prisoners' families handle the university choice and enrolment processes of the prisoners, and should they have none, a staff member authorized by the prison education unit carries out these processes. In 2024, due to the Higher Education Council's directive that prisoners enrolled in universities providing formal education should not be allowed to take exams on the grounds that they do not meet the requirement of attending classes, as well as the impact of the amendments to Law No. 7532, prisoners in closed prisons lost their right to benefit from formal education.

During the school choice process of the External Transfer Exam, which has to be taken for transfer from two-year associate degree programs to four-year undergraduate programs, prisoners cannot access information concerning which universities would accept the course credits they earned from the undergraduate courses they have taken. To access this information, the prisoners' kin have to call the relevant universities one by one and get information. For the Internal Transfer applications that allow transfers between departments and universities, each university has its specific conditions. The academic record achievement scores, which are one of the conditions for application, create inequality between prisoners, who are disadvantaged in accessing the right to education, and students in the outside world.

Policy Recommendation:

The amendments made under Law No. 7532 should be detailed and governed by regulation, and the restriction on prisoners in closed prisons only participating in in-institution formal education should be lifted. Prisoners' access to the campus environment for exams and certain educational activities should be reassessed within the framework of specific security measures.

All regulations and subjective criteria (such as academic performance, disciplinary penalties, and whether the university is compatible with prison operations) that could restrict access to education for prisoners in open prisons should be removed.

Vague terms such as "institutional capacity" and "security conditions" in relation to access to education should be supported by concrete criteria. These criteria should be clearly defined to prevent arbitrary practices.

7.3.4. School Commutes and Transfers

Prisoners in closed prisons can take exams in prisons that serve as exam centers or in the prisons where they are held. Prisoners in open prisons have the right to travel to a school within the municipal boundaries of the prison in accordance with the academic calendar, course, and exam schedules. According to the amendments made by Law No. 7532, due to public transportation restrictions, the prison administration may restrict prisoners' right to benefit from formal education by regularly attending classes. According to applications received by CISST in 2024, prison administrations may make decisions to prevent prisoners from going to and from school based on arbitrary criteria. Furthermore, prisoners held in cities different from the universities they are attending applied to CISST in 2024 on the grounds that their requests for transfer based on their right to education were rejected.

7.3.5. Computer Use and Internet Access

The prisoners can benefit from technological facilities in education in the specified sections of the prison, accompanied by staff and subject to the permission of the administration. However, prison administrations reject prisoners' requests related to this, depending on reasons such as insufficient infrastructure, and security. Prisoners can apply to legal objection mechanisms against such decisions of the administration and have them annulled.

Prisoners who are allowed to use computers cannot take the computers to their rooms. Student prisoners must use computers and watch courses on the National Judiciary Network Information System (UYAP), using a restricted internet connection, between specified hours in the sections designated for computer use in the prison. However, problems such as the darkness and lack of ventilation in these sections designated for computer use, as well as the need to go to and return to their rooms to meet their personal needs, create difficulties for student prisoners. Furthermore, the technical problems in the UYAP system may hinder student prisoners from taking exams or following the courses.

Policy Recommendation:

With the development of technological capabilities in prisons, the scope of the Smart Technologies Integration Project for Penal Institutions, which is being implemented as part of efforts to achieve digital transformation, should include learning processes. Infrastructure and independent sections should be created in each prison to provide computer use and internet access according to the capacity of the prison.

7.3.6. Economic Difficulties

The economic crisis that continued throughout 2024 directly affected the learning processes of student prisoners. Price increases on items such as educational materials, exam fees, registration fees, and stationery expenses have made it difficult for prisoners, who are often dependent on their families' financial support, to access their right to education. It has been reported that in some prisons, student prisoners are required to pay for printer output or course materials, and these payments cannot be met.

Furthermore, increased transportation costs for prisoners continuing their education outside open prisons have affected the sustainability of continuing education. Prisoners who do not receive regular financial support from their families or who have no economic income are therefore unable to continue their studies or take exams.

Policy Recommendation:

The expenses related to prisoners' education should be covered by a protocol between the Ministry of Justice and the Higher Education Council; material support should be provided for open education students, and transportation support should be provided for prisoners studying in open prisons.

7.3.7. Socialization and Communication with the Outside World

The right to education for prisoners does not only mean access to information and academic progress; it also contributes to strengthening the social relationships they establish with other prisoners, educators, and the outside world. Therefore, it also has a critical function in terms of maintaining the individual's social existence and preserving their connection with society.

The opportunities for prisoners pursuing education to communicate with the outside world constitute an important part of the educational process. As is well known, prisoners' communication with the outside world is through lawyer visits, visitors, telephone calls, and correspondence. Therefore, prisoners have limited resources for accessing education-related information or course materials. Prisoners' connection with universities is mostly established through their relatives or guardians. Financial constraints, communication limitations, and restrictions imposed for security reasons lead to a decrease in relations with the outside world.

Some prisoners have experienced delays in submitting theses, assignments, or projects because they cannot communicate regularly with their advisors; their learning processes have been disrupted due to academic materials sent from the outside world arriving late or not arriving at all. This situation also leads to serious academic losses for prisoners studying at the master's and doctoral levels. The restrictions introduced in line with the amendments made under Law No. 7532 prevent prisoners from being in environments such as university campuses or educational institutions, depriving them of social and academic interaction.

Policy Recommendation:

The education provided to prisoners should be equivalent to that provided to the same age groups in the outside world, and the scope of learning opportunities should be as broad as possible.

Educational activities should support individual learning and be supplemented by collaborative work, group discussions, and project-based activities; environments should be created where prisoners can work together and exchange ideas.

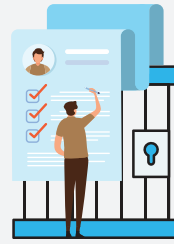
Culture, art, and sports-based learning methods should be promoted; these activities should create processes that are both educational and socializing.

Learning opportunities connected to the outside world (distance learning, digital course content, guest lecturer participation, etc.) should be increased; prisoners should be encouraged to interact with academic communities.

The principle of equal opportunity in education should be applied to all prisoners without distinction based on gender, age, status, or security type; everyone who wishes to study should be able to effectively benefit from this right.



Prison Labor



Number of prisoners corresponded with in 2024

8

Yıllık Temel İnsan Hakleri istatistikleri
and Death Fast
-



Psychosocial Services
-

Transfer Request
1



Administration and Monitoring Boards' Decisions and Execution
-

Violation of Rights
-



Isolation
-

Discrimination
3



Prison
2

Torture and ill-treatment
6



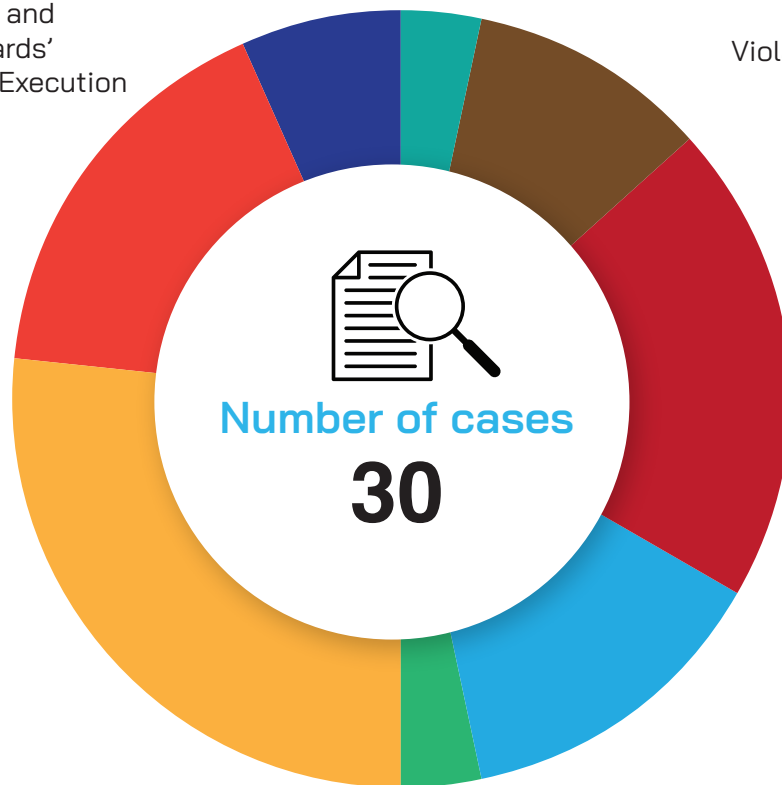
Discipline
5

Freedom of Expression
4



Thematic
8

Visits
1



8. PRISON LABOR

8.1. Definition

To meet their needs in prison, prisoners who do not get financial support from a family member or kin can be employed in jobs provided by the Workshops Authorities and/or in jobs requested from the prisoner by the prison administration. Regarding labour and worker prisoners in prisons in Türkiye, the forms of employment can be categorized as follows:

Working in in-house cleaning, kitchen, canteen, etc. jobs: External personnel are not specifically employed for daily cleaning, tea shop service, cooking and serving meals in the prisons. These jobs are undertaken by prisoners in the wards called “worker wards”, although there is no legal practice or regulation regarding this matter. Prisoners in these wards are not paid a “salary” for the work done, but the prison administration may deposit an amount to the prisoner’s canteen account in the nature of an allowance.

Employment in workshops: Prisoners may be employed in workplaces established within the structure of the Workshops Authority in closed and open prisons, and inside and outside prisons (courthouse tea service, parking lots, etc.). Employment in the public sector: In the framework of protocols made between prisons and public institutions, prisoners held in open prisons can be employed within the structure of these institutions. In this context, general cleaning work at public prosecutor’s offices, various military installations, and municipalities are the main forms of such employment.

Employment in the private sector: Within the scope of agreements made by prison administrations with private companies, prisoners in open and closed prisons can be employed by these companies. As such, prisoners can be employed in various jobs, ranging from textile work to shoe and dumpling production. Article 18 of the Constitution contains the provision “No one shall be forced to work. Forced labor is prohibited”.⁹² However, in the rest of the relevant article, (forced) employment in prison is defined as an exception. According to paragraph 1 of Article 29 of Law No. 5275 on the Execution of Sentences and Security Measures, “sentenced prisoners who do not have a profession and the willing prisoners who have a profession and who are found to be mentally and physically healthy by the institution’s physician, can be employed in workplaces or workshops in return for a salary to be determined within the bounds of possibility of the institution.” In this context, it is compulsory for a sentenced prisoner to work in prison if he/she is healthy and does not have a profession. Paragraph 2 of the same article states that the purpose of employment in prison is to teach prisoners professions and handicrafts with which they can earn their living after their release and to strengthen their will to produce.

8.2. General Conditions

The fact that the majority of prisoners working in prisons are held in open penal institutions is one of the factors that makes it difficult for us to reach them. Some prisoners are afraid of losing their jobs and are concerned about being subjected to psychological or economic violence, which makes it difficult for them to convey their problems to our association.

⁹² <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/mevzuatmetin/1.5.5275.pdf>. Access Date: 10/30/2025

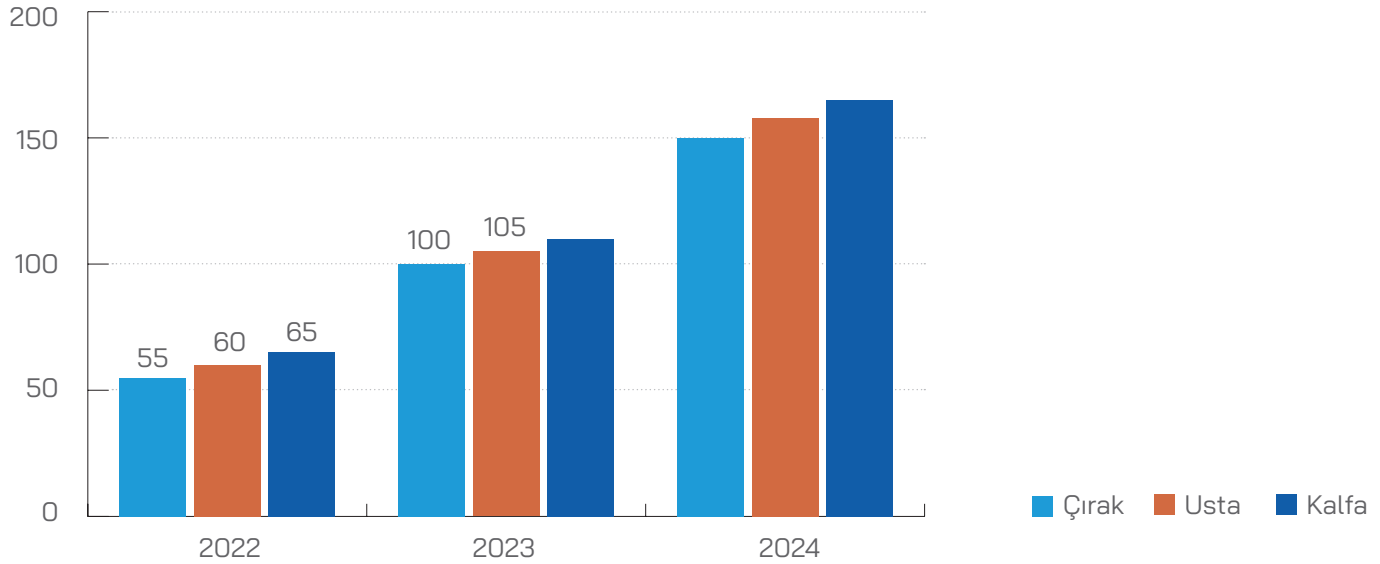
Prisoners are generally employed in prison workshops, but in 2024, the CTE signed cooperation protocols with some municipalities to integrate prisoners into society and employ them in public services.⁹³ However, the protocols do not cover all prisoners, and prisoners' right to work is not applied equally based on criteria such as the type of crime and whether they pose a risk.

8.3. Prominent Issues

8.3.1. Workshops Institution

The objectives of the Workshops Authority are to ensure the employment of more sentenced prisoners and prisoners on remand in the workshops, to increase the number of open penal institutions, and to increase the quality in the production of goods and services. Providing the sentenced and remand prisoners with professions and reintegrating them into society are also among the objectives of the Workshops Authority.

Yıllara göre çalışan hükümlü ve tutuklulara ödenen gündelik tutarı



In 2024, the daily wage for prisoners working as master status is 165 TL, while the daily wages for prisoners working in other capacities are as follows: 158 TL for journeymen, 150 TL for apprentices, and 143 TL for trainees.⁹⁴ No interim wage increase was given to working prisoners in 2024.

The overtime wage paid to the sentenced and prisoner on remand was determined as 6 TL. Wages given to worker prisoners remained well below the poverty line and the minimum wage.

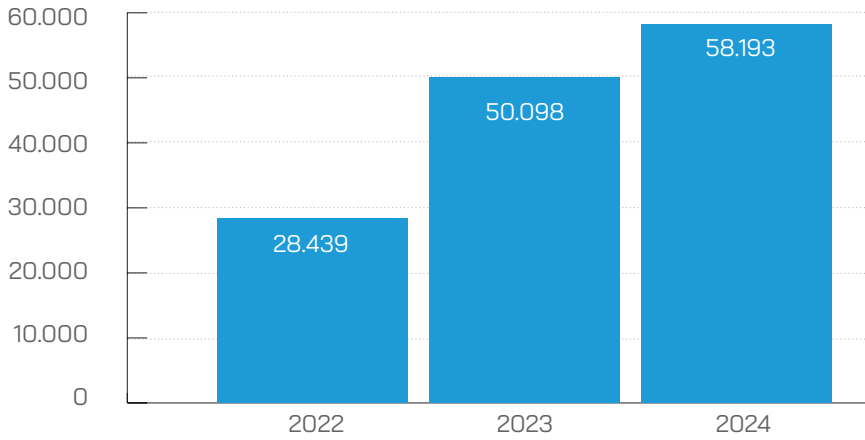
There are 373 prison workshop directorates in prisons in 2024.⁹⁵ In 2024, we submitted an application for the right to information to the Ministry of Justice asking, "How many prisoners are working in open penal institutions in 2024?" and "How many prisoners are working in closed penal institutions in 2024?" The response stated that the answer for the right to information request could not be provided because it could only be obtained through special work, research, or investigation. However, the number of working prisoners was shared with the public in the 2024 activity report published by the Ministry of Justice Workshops Authority. According to the report, 58,193 sentenced and remand prisoners worked in 2024. The number of working prisoners increased by 16.16% compared to 2023.

⁹³ CTE, (2024). Protocols. <https://cte.adalet.gov.tr/Home/BilgiDetay/21>

⁹⁴ General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Houses, (2024). Financial Limits <https://iydb.adalet.gov.tr/Resimler/Dokuman/4032024135128PARASAL%20SINIRLAR%202020-2024.pdf>

⁹⁵ Prison Institutions and Detention Centers Workshop Institution, (2025). 2024 Activity Report. <https://iydb.adalet.gov.tr/Resimler/Dokuman/280320250952242024%20FAALİET%20RAPORU%2025%20Mart.pdf>

Yıllara göre çalışan hükümlü ve tutuklu sayısı



Prisoners are employed in the production and service activities carried out within the Workshops Authority. In this context, they work in production areas such as bakery products, food packaging, livestock activities, and mineral processing, as well as in service activities such as tea shops, canteens, sales stores, courthouse parking lots, social facilities, and restaurants. Although it is stated that these activities are

carried out with the aim of enabling prisoners to acquire professional skills, participate in a productive process, and increase their employment opportunities after release, in practice, numerous rights violations and structural problems are observed.

Worker prisoners have contacted our association via letter or our helpline and they have reported serious problems, particularly regarding occupational safety and working conditions. The reports indicate that occupational safety measures are not taken, protective equipment is not provided, and adequate health support is not given after work accidents. In addition, there have been many reports that prisoners with health problems or disabilities are made to do heavy work.

Prisoners stated that the wages paid for their work were very low. Inadequate wages make it difficult to meet even basic needs within the prison and lead to prisoners becoming more economically vulnerable. This situation increases concerns that prisoner labor is largely considered low-cost labor.

Furthermore, the work requests of prisoners who wish to work have been rejected. Prisoners serving aggravated life sentences are unable to work due to the enforcement regime; LGBTI+ prisoners are unable to work due to the discrimination they face; and foreign nationals are unable to work due to language barriers.

Policy Recommendation:

The right to work should be applied equally to all prisoners, and work should not be compulsory. There should be no status difference between working and non-working prisoners.

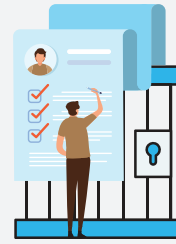
8.3.2. Vocational Training Activities for Prisoners

In order to conduct vocational training activities for sentenced and remand prisoners in a more systematic manner and in accordance with principles and guidelines, the Justice Vocational Training Centers Project, established within penal institutions under the Education and Training Cooperation Protocol signed between the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Justice on March 9, 2020, continued in 2024.

In 2024, 13 new Justice Vocational Training Centers opened in different provinces, bringing the total number of centers to 52. A total of 3,122 prisoners received education at these schools.



Foreign Prisoners



Number of prisoners corresponded with in 2024

43

Yıllık Temel Hukuk İstatistikleri
and Death Fast
-



Psychosocial Services
-

Transfer Request
14



Administration and Monitoring Boards' Decisions and Execution
4

Violation of Rights
8



Isolation
1

Discrimination
1



Prison
4

Torture and ill-treatment
1



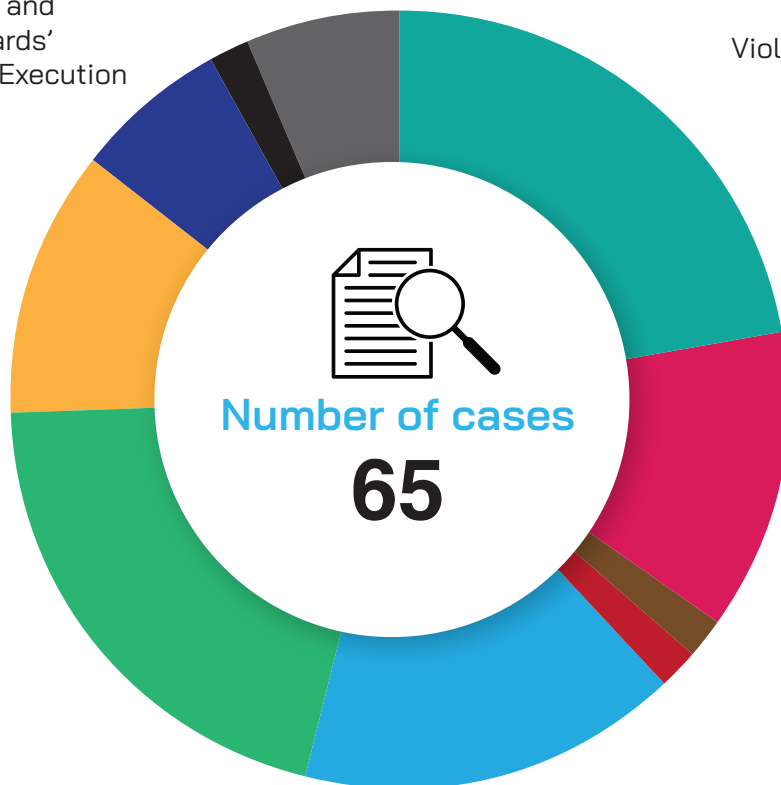
Discipline
-

Freedom of Expression
10



Thematic
7

Visits
13



9. FOREIGN PRISONERS

9.1. Definition

Foreign prisoners are all persons who do not have the nationality of the country where they were imprisoned. Among these persons are those who have the status of legal permanent resident in the country in question. These are immigrants who have moved to that country for the purpose of long-term residence, creating new societies or joining existing societies. However, the category of foreign prisoners also includes persons in various situations, such as tourists, persons in transit or temporarily present in the country for their commercial or personal business, as well as undocumented immigrants, asylum seekers, stateless persons and those involved in transnational crimes. They are subject to the legislation of the Republic of Türkiye, provisions specific to foreigners in laws, international agreements, and bilateral protocols signed between countries. Crime and criminal justice statistics, including prison statistics, do not make distinctions in this regard and only use the general category of foreigners.⁹⁶ Trial and imprisonment proceedings conducted in a foreign language, being held in prison in a foreign country, daily life and official procedures conducted in a language they do not understand, being separated from their families and unable to communicate with them, and consequently unable to access financial income, and being subjected to discrimination due to being a foreigner, lead to foreign prisoners being prisoners with special needs.

9.2. General Conditions

Due to reasons such as prisons being closed spaces, communication being restricted, and limited information sharing by official institutions, the ways of obtaining information about prisons in Türkiye are quite limited. Since there is no ground for non-governmental organizations, independent researchers and academicians to observe and produce in prisons, the ways of obtaining information consist of official applications and parliamentary question.

The General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Houses does not publish regular statistical data on foreign prisoners. In response to our application for the right to information in 2024, the Ministry of Justice shared the number of foreign prisoners and their breakdown by age, gender, and nationality as of September 19, 2024. According to this response, there are currently 14,276 foreign prisoners. In addition, the Ministry of Justice's General Directorate of Judicial Records and Statistics stated that there were 15,046 foreign prisoners in 2024.⁹⁷

The nationality distribution of prisoners shows a concentration from countries close to the border of Türkiye which are experiencing migration due to reasons such as war and internal unrest. Looking at Türkiye's foreign prisoner data, which has been increasing over the years, we can see the reflections of the migrations received quickly and intensively. Considering the fact that Türkiye is a route from the Middle East and Central Asia to Europe, it can be predicted that the number of foreign prisoners will continue to increase in the coming years. It is important for the Ministry of Justice to produce common policies in communication with non-governmental organizations in order to solve the problems arising from migration and to prevent the problems experienced by foreign prisoners.

⁹⁶ Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics – SPACE | 2022 Key Findings, Trans. CISST, Istanbul, 2023, p. 11

⁹⁷ Ministry of Justice, General Directorate of Judicial Records and Statistics, (2025). Penal Institution Statistics, 2024

<https://adlisicil.adalet.gov.tr/Resimler/SayfaDokuman/5052025093023Haber%20Bülteni%20-%20CTE%20%2005%20Mayıs%202025%20Birleştirilmiş.pdf>

9.3. Prominent Issues

9.3.1. Language Barrier

Foreign prisoners start to have problems with language before the prison process and after they are detained. Their interrogations are often made by law enforcement officers who do not speak a foreign language, without the support of an interpreter, and similarly, they can be arrested due to the problems they experience in expressing themselves at the prosecutor's office and court stage.

Information required to live in prison according to national legislation in Türkiye, (disciplinary offences and penalties, ways of obtaining information and complaints, rights and questions, etc.) For foreign prisoners on remand who do not speak Turkish, it must first be translated into their own language, in cases where it is not possible, into English, French and German.⁹⁸ In response to our right to information request on this subject in 2024, the Ministry of Justice quoted the relevant provision and stated that "Due to changes in enforcement practices and relevant legislation as required by the aforementioned provision, it has become necessary to update the "Handbook for Sentenced and Prisoners on Remand ". The necessary amendments were made to the Handbook in question, and it was translated into English, French, German, Arabic, Persian, and Russian. The Handbook was also translated into Braille for visually impaired prisoners, sentenced and on remand." However, the current situation shows the exact opposite of this provision and the response given. Indeed, it is not known how many copies of the Handbook, which is said to have been translated, were printed in which languages and to which institutions they were distributed to prisoners.

The most common problem reported to our association by foreign prisoners, their relatives, and cellmates is that the institution does not provide language support or information to prisoners who do not speak Turkish, and therefore they cannot exercise any of their rights unless they have a cellmate who can translate for them.

Based on the applications received by our association, we can state that foreign prisoners do not fully know the rights and responsibilities due to the language barrier. Foreign prisoners may face various disciplinary penalties, especially due to ignorance of their responsibilities. Similarly, they cannot make a healthy official application regarding the problems they experience due to not knowing their rights. In connection with this situation, they may be exposed to further rights violations by being unable to defend themselves. Beyond all this, even if a foreign prisoner knows their rights and responsibilities verbally, they may experience problems in meeting their basic needs and accessing services because they cannot write a petition in Turkish.

The language barrier significantly reduces or completely cuts off foreign prisoners' communication with their relatives and the outside world. Foreign prisoners sending letters in their native languages may be blocked by the reading committee. For this reason, the number of foreign prisoners who can reach our association and correspond with us is also quite limited.

Foreign prisoners also face language barriers when it comes to accessing printed, visual and audio publications. Since there is no healthy information about the publications in foreign languages in the prison libraries, foreign prisoners who do not speak Turkish cannot benefit from these sources.

⁹⁸ Presidential Legislation Information System, (2004). Law on the Execution of Penalties and Security Measures, Article 22/.

Policy Recommendation:

Legal procedures, prison rules, sample petitions, and other informative notes should be translated into the languages of foreign prisoners, translation support should be requested from consulates if necessary, and these should be given to prisoners on the day they enter prison.

The right of foreign prisoners to correspond in their own languages should be guaranteed.

9.3.2. Access to Healthcare Services

Language-related barriers are one of the main problems experienced in accessing health services as well as access to justice. A foreign prisoner who does not speak Turkish has problems in accessing health services when prison employees do not speak the language or do not provide translation services.

In order to go to the infirmary, a prisoner must first write a petition in Turkish. For this reason, they cannot access health services when they do not speak Turkish. The only solution here is for foreign prisoners to ask for help from their wardmates. In other words, there is an unfair situation left entirely to the initiative of the prisoners.

A foreign prisoner who can overcome the petition problem continues to face language-related obstacles after being able to go to the infirmary. In cases where the infirmary doctor or the health personnel in the prison do not speak a foreign language in the later period, problems such as delays in the examination, diagnosis and treatment of diseases or inability to be referred to the hospital and access to medicine may occur.

In the case of equipment required for health, if there is no special report, the prisoners must pay the necessary financial price themselves. Considering the fact that foreign prisoners lack financial income and solidarity, it can be stated that they have problems in this regard as well.

Policy Recommendation:

Necessary information about the right to health and health policies should be provided in different languages, taking transparency into account. Translator support should be provided to prisoners while benefiting from health services.

9.3.3. Visits

Foreign prisoners have the same rights as other prisoners in terms of visitor reception, telephone communication and video calls. Prisoners can be visited four times a month, one with contact and three non-contact. In addition, if the prisoner is not an aggravated life prisoner, a maximum of 10 minutes of phone calls can be made every week. Although legally all prisoners have the equal rights to visits and phone calls, this equality in the laws creates a ground against foreign prisoners in practice.

In order for foreign prisoners to benefit from the rights of contact/non-contact visits, telephone and video call, they must prove their kin through diplomatic missions.⁹⁹ It is not possible for foreign prisoners to meet with their families and relatives, who are citizens of countries that do not have a representative office in Türkiye or do not work for different reasons. In addition, prisoners who cannot communicate with the official representative of their country cannot benefit from the right to communicate by phone. This situation constitutes a serious violation of rights for

⁹⁹ Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Legislation Information System, (2020). Regulation on the Administration of Penal Institutions and Execution of Sentences and Security Measures, Article 74.

foreign prisoners. For the relatives of foreign prisoners, the visit is much more costly and time-consuming than the relatives of Turkish prisoners. For this reason, although the relatives of foreign prisoners can come much less to visit, the time they can meet with the prisoners when they come is the same as that of Turkish prisoners.

On the other hand, in order for foreign prisoners to be able to communicate, visitors of foreign prisoners sentenced and on remand for criminal offenses must apply to the Chief Public Prosecutor's Office.¹⁰⁰ This application can also be made by mail to the correspondence office of the court to which the institution where the prisoner is located is affiliated.

Policy Recommendation:

An alternative system should be established by taking into account the life safety and legal security of the prisoners in order for foreign prisoners who do not want to reach the consulates/embassies of the country they are citizens of for reasons of life safety and legal security to exercise their rights of having visits.

When considering foreign prisoners whose families cannot come to visit for contact and non-contact visits, the time limit of the phone call is to the detriment of them. The time difference between countries also causes foreign prisoners not to be able to make phone calls. In addition, since phone calls between countries are more expensive than inner-city and intercity phone calls, they force the limited financial opportunities of foreign prisoners. The high cost of international calls can also be a burden for prisoners who have the financial means to make these calls. Some foreign prisoners who contacted our association stated that the cards they used for phone calls ran out during the call, causing the call to be interrupted, and that they had to change cards frequently throughout the call.

Prisoners who cannot use the weekly visitation right in prisons with the necessary technical infrastructure for video phone calls are given an additional 30 minutes for the next phone call. This period is non-transferable and is limited to the first week after the week in which the right to visit cannot be used. Calls within this scope can also be made by dividing into 10 minutes, provided that they do not exceed a total of three calls in the same week. These calls can be made with video or only with audio.¹⁰¹ Limitations in this practice may also create rights violations and victimization of foreign prisoners from time to time depending on their unique situations.

Policy Recommendation:

Considering that foreign prisoners are far from their families, arrangements should be made to take into account the time differences in phone calls.

Prisoners who are financially in a difficult situation should be able to make phone calls and/or video calls without a phone card.

In line with the requests of foreign prisoners, they should be transferred to prisons with video calls.

¹⁰⁰ Official Gazette, (2018). Regulation on Amendments to the Regulation on Visits to Sentenced Prisoners on Remand. Article 3.

¹⁰¹ Korkut, H., Altun, R., (2024). Prisoners' Rights Handbook. CISST, Istanbul, p.36

9.3.4. Economic Difficulties

In Turkish prisons, everything except lighting electricity and water flowing from the tap is paid for by the prisoners. Even the money of three meals, which are essential for life, is requested from him or his family at certain periods under the name of the food price after the verdict of a prisoner is finalized. For example, when a prisoner wants to have tea, he/she pays the price of the tea he/she will brew and the tool he/she will use to heat the water and the electricity he/she uses. If he wants to watch television, he buys the television sold in the canteen and pays for the electricity he uses. On top of all this, they even have to buy cleaning and hygiene materials that are essential for life.

The conditions above also applies to communication. Prisoners also pay for the phone and video calls they make with their families and relatives. If a prisoner is deprived of financial power, he/she cannot communicate with his/her family and relatives by letter, phone or video call. Increases in canteen prices in connection with inflation and economic crisis conditions affect the lives of prisoners more and more deeply.

Working in workshops in open/closed prisons is very important for foreign prisoners, even if the wages are very low. Prisoners who do not benefit from the right to work survive in prison with the limited amount of money sent by their families and relatives. Foreign prisoners may be deprived of this opportunity for various reasons. Some prisoners who contacted our association stated that their requests to work were rejected on the grounds that they were foreign nationals. In addition to the rejection of prisoners' requests to work on the grounds that they are foreign nationals, our right to information requests regarding which prisons foreign prisoners can work in are left unanswered on the grounds that the information is not subject to disclosure.

Foreign prisoners may be exposed to poverty during the imprisonment process due to the poverty of families, limited communication channels, high remittance fees between countries and internal problems in countries. For example, in order to deposit a money sent through a private financial service provider or institution to a prisoner in prison, someone in Türkiye must withdraw the money sent and deposit it on behalf of the prisoner through PTT or Vakıf Bank. Foreign prisoners cannot access this money from prison if they do not have a trusted relative in Türkiye and are dependent on the reliability of intermediaries. Some prisons have accounts and IBAN numbers in different currencies and can share this information with families. This is the easiest and most reliable way to send money from abroad to a prisoner in Türkiye. Widespread adoption of this system in all prisons would prevent prisoners from suffering hardship.

Even when prisoners are able to work in prison, low wages are often not enough to provide basic needs. In addition, aggravated life prisoners are not allowed to benefit from workshops and courses. Therefore, the current conditions are more difficult for a foreign aggravated life sentence.

Due to economic difficulties, some prisoners also experience difficulties in accessing clothing. Many foreign prisoners are unable to receive clothing support from their families because of the high cost of shipping from abroad. For this reason, the clothing support provided by some civil society organizations is extremely important for foreign prisoners.

9.3.5. Transfer to Another Country or Prison

Foreign prisoners held in Turkish prisons have the right to be transferred to the country of their citizenship or to another country where their social ties are strong, provided that they pay the transfer fee themselves and carry out the necessary procedure.¹⁰² However, even if a foreign prisoner fulfills all the necessary conditions, this process may take up to two years or even longer due to bureaucratic obstacles. In addition, applications for the transfer of foreign prisoners in Türkiye first sent to the relevant prosecutor's office, then to the CTE, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the consulate of the country where the prisoner is a citizen, and finally to the official authorities in the other country. Most of the time, this long bureaucratic process is both financially and morally challenging for foreign prisoners.

Policy Recommendation:

The procedures for the transfer of foreign prisoners to their native countries shall be simplified, thus expediting the process, and the aggravation experienced by prisoners who wanted to be transferred shall be prevented.

Foreign prisoners often request transfer to prisons close to the border or to the city where their relatives residing in Türkiye live so that their relatives can visit them. If the prisoner's relative is also a foreign national, traveling from their registered city to another one is often subject to permission. In addition, most relatives of foreign prisoners face economic difficulties, preventing them from visiting. For relatives of foreign prisoners coming from other countries, reaching a city far from the airport in Türkiye or a prison outside the city is a very difficult process.

Transfer requests made by foreign prisoners are mostly rejected on the grounds that the requested institution is not suitable for foreigners or due to capacity reasons. The rejection of transfers for these reasons constitutes a violation of rights. Our requests for information regarding the criteria for determining whether prisons are suitable for foreigners or which prisons in Türkiye are classified as suitable for foreigners are left unanswered on the grounds of internal institutional information.

Policy Recommendation:

The right to family and private life of foreign prisoners must be protected, and the necessary arrangements must be made to meet their transfer requests.

9.3.6. Discrimination

Foreign prisoners may face discrimination based on language, ethnic origin, or nationality. This creates inequality in access to health, petition, work, and education rights.

Foreign prisoners reported that they were discriminated against by both prison administrations and other prisoners due to their ethnic origin and language barrier, and that discrimination generally took the form of verbal and psychological violence. Foreign prisoners have faced discrimination while exercising their rights to video visits, work, education, correspondence, healthcare, petitions, and complaints.

¹⁰² Official Gazette, (2016). Law. Law No. 6706 on International Judicial Cooperation in Criminal Matters. Article 32.

Like other prisoners, foreign prisoners are also subject to discrimination based on the type of crime when it comes to video calls. Foreign prisoners should be subject to separate procedures regarding video calls, as many foreign prisoners are unable to exercise their right to open and closed visits.

Foreign prisoners' right to petition and complain may be arbitrarily denied, a practice based on racial and ethnic discrimination. In some cases, foreign prisoners' right to work is also arbitrarily denied due to discrimination. Some prisoners have been told that they cannot work because they are foreign nationals, even though they have the right to work. Combined with this discrimination, foreign prisoners, who are often unable to receive financial support from their relatives, are pushed into deep poverty.

Policy Recommendation:

Prison staff should receive human rights-based training, and internal control mechanisms against discrimination should be strengthened.

9.3.7. Risk of Deportation

The risk of deportation after release is one of the greatest concerns for foreign prisoners. Despite the prohibition of refoulement, which is protected by international and national legislation, some prisoners who are deported after their release face risks to their safety. In 2024, many Syrian prisoners who applied at different times stated that a deportation decision had been made against them and that their lives would be in danger if they were deported to Syria after their release. In their letters, the prisoners described the violations suffered by their relatives who had been released in a similar manner previously.

Foreign nationals' arrest or sentencing of any crime may lead to the revocation of their protection status, which allows them to remain in Türkiye on the grounds that they "pose a threat to public order."¹⁰³

As it has limited ability to monitor the post-release process, CISST advises prisoners to apply for protection before their release and, if their release is imminent, to contact organizations working with migrants in the same province. Foreign prisoners released from prison are usually transferred to Removal Centres, where deportation procedures are initiated. However, it remains unclear to what extent individual risk assessments are conducted regarding whether these individuals will be subjected to ill-treatment in the country to which they will be sent, and whether they have access to legal representation and effective appeal mechanisms.

Policy Recommendation:

In deportation processes, the safety of individuals should be prioritized by considering their individual security situation, and the ban on deportation should be complied with.

¹⁰³ Presidential Legislation Information System, (2013). Law. Law No. 6458 on Foreigners and International Protection, Article 54.

CONCLUSION

2024 has been a year in which structural problems have deepened and rights violations have become widespread in terms of the situation in Türkiye's prisons and prisoners' rights. This report comprehensively reveals the problems experienced in prisons throughout the year, both the rights violations, and the underlying causes of these violations. The data obtained shows that the problems facing the Türkiye's penal system are not temporary, but structural and persistent in nature.

Reaching a number of prisoners above the prison capacity both negatively affects the living conditions of the prisoners and complicates the functioning of the prisons. Although efforts have been made to increase capacity in recent years by building new prisons and expanding existing ones, these steps have been insufficient in the face of the rapid increase in the number of prisoners. Although the "New Enforcement Regulation" that came into force in 2023 provided some relief, by 2024, the situation had once again reached critical levels.

Furthermore, the failure to sufficiently discuss and address alternatives to imprisonment beyond prison sentences in the reforms to be implemented as part of the judicial reform strategy has prevented the development of a judicial and penal policy based on human rights .

The economic crisis in Türkiye has had profound effects not only in the outside world but also in prisons. The inability of prisoners to meet their basic needs due to increases in canteen prices has led to poverty levels becoming apparent in prisons as well. Increases in the cost of sending letters, video call fees, transportation costs for transfers to other prisons and attending funerals, and the requirement that prisoners cover these costs themselves have created serious economic pressure on prisoners and led to their impoverishment. The economic crisis has also severely restricted prisoners' communication with the outside world. The impoverishment experienced by prisoners and their relatives clearly reveals the inadequacy of social support mechanisms in the penal system. Comprehensive support and remedial policies are required for prisoners to cope with poverty.

Although video conferencing (ACEP/e-visit) and e-doctor applications, which were rolled out in 2024, are presented as tools that facilitate prisoners' access to communication and health services, these applications are no substitute for face-to-face visits and quality health services. Infrastructure deficiencies, economic barriers, the exclusion of certain groups of prisoners from these applications, and arbitrary restrictions prevent the equitable and sustainable use of these systems. There is a risk that digital applications will be used to perpetuate existing restrictions on rights rather than as tools to expand prisoners' access to their fundamental rights.

As detailed in the report, isolation practices have become systematic in 2024, particularly in high-security, S and Y type prisons. Prisoners deprived of social activities, workshops, and communal activities are held under severe isolation. This situation leaves deep scars on prisoners' physical and psychological health. The spread of isolation stands out as one of the key factors increasing rights violations.

Complaints about rights violations indicate that prisoners have serious problems in accessing health services, especially for prisoners with chronic diseases, treatment processes are disrupted. Access to health is one of the most fundamental rights of prisoners, and any neglect and deficiency in this regard directly affects the right to life of prisoners.

The increase in prisoner deaths in prisons in 2024 points to serious and structural problems regarding the protection of the right to life in prisons. The fact that these deaths include prisoners whose sentences should have been postponed due to serious illnesses highlights how inadequate access to healthcare and delays translate into violations of the right to life. The failure to conduct effective, transparent, and independent investigations into prisoner deaths increases the risk of impunity and paves the way for similar violations to continue.

The report also details the specific problems and rights violations faced by groups with special needs, such as children, women, LGBTI+ individuals, persons with disabilities, prisoners with health conditions, prisoners serving aggravated life sentences, students, workers, and foreign prisoners. These prisoners face additional difficulties arising from both general prison conditions and their own specific circumstances. This situation demonstrates the urgent need to prevent discrimination in prisons and to develop protective and preventive policies for prisoners with special needs.

In conclusion, the 2024 Türkiye prisons report clearly demonstrates the need for comprehensive, human rights-based reform of the penal system. Improving the physical conditions of prisons, preventing overcrowding, ending solitary confinement practices, ensuring prisoners' access to basic needs, preventing rights violations, and adopting supportive policies and urgent measures for impoverished prisoners are among the urgent priorities.

This report provides a comprehensive overview of the current state of the penal system in Türkiye and highlights the reforms that need to be made in this area. Protecting prisoners' rights is fundamental to establishing a penal system that respects human rights. Therefore, immediate action must be taken to improve living conditions in prisons and ensure prisoners' access to their rights. Protecting prisoners' rights will not only improve their living conditions but also strengthen society's belief in justice and human rights.

İletişim Bilgileri

Ceza İnfaz Sisteminde Sivil Toplum
Derneği (CİSST)
Caferağa Mah. Sakız Güllü Sok. Kazdal
Apt. No:28 D:8, 34710
Kadıköy/ İstanbul / Türkiye
+90 216 450 50 05
info@cisst.org.tr
cisst.org.tr



Bizi takip edin @cisstdernegi



Herhangi bir şikayet, öneri ya da yorumunuz için geribildirim@cisst.org.tr mail adresini kullanabilirsiniz.



CİSST
CEZA İNFAZ SİSTEMİNDE SİVİL TOPLUM DERNEĞİ
CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE PENAL SYSTEM