



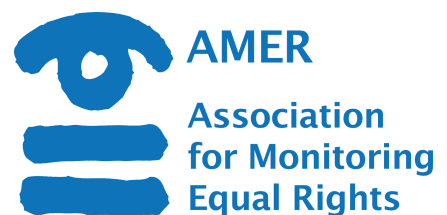
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ANNUAL REPORT 2023

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EQUALITY
WATCH CENTRE

Annual Report 2023

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



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1. WHAT DOES THE EQUALITY WATCH CENTER (EWC) DO? | OUR STORY



Equality Watch Center (EWC) was established in 2022 in order to create an opportunity for civil society organizations, human rights defenders, professional organizations, academic institutions and researchers operating at national and international levels to work together to strengthen access to justice for individuals and groups who are discriminated against in Turkey.

Equality Watch Center operates within the scope of "Together Against Discrimination: Building a Civil Society Coalition to Improve Access to Justice for Victims of Discrimination", which is implemented by the Association for Monitoring Equal Rights (AMER) and the Netherlands Helsinki Committee (NHC) and supported by the European Union.

Main Activities of EWC:

- It carries engages in monitoring and advocacy activities together with civil society organizations and other stakeholders working in this field to support individuals and groups that are discriminated against,
- Monitors and reports the activities of institutions operating in the fight against discrimination and supporting equality policies, such as the Human Rights and Equality Institution of Türkiye (HREIT), Ombudsman Institution (KDK), and provides opinions and recommendations for these institutions to operate within the framework of the Paris Principles,
- Provides grant support and research scholarships to civil society organisations and academics working in the field of discrimination,
- Supports the activities of the "Anti-Discrimination Network", which consists of civil society organizations, bar associations and academics dedicated to combating discrimination,
- It receives applications from individuals and groups against discrimination, makes relevant recommendations and directs these applications to relevant institutions when necessary.

1.1 WHAT DID EWC DO AGAINST DISCRIMINATION IN 2023? | A BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF EWC

1.1.1 2023 IN NUMBERS

1  DISCRIMINATION PERCEPTION RESEARCH(2022)

14  MEETINGS

3  HREIT DECISION ANALYSIS REPORT

2  EARTHQUAKE ZONE MONITORING REPORT

2  CAMPAIGNS

9  CORPORATE APPLICATIONS (HREIT)

5  BLOG POSTS

18  NEWS AND CONTENT

35  CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS,
6 BAR ASSOCIATIONS
2 UNIVERSITIES

16.093
 WEBSITE VISITORS

1.608
 OUR SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS

1.1.2 ANTI-DISCRIMINATION NETWORK MEMBERS



EWC | Turkey Network, also known as the "Network Against Discrimination", consists of the gathering of civil society organizations, professional organizations, academic centers, human rights defenders, independent researchers and experts working in this field working against discrimination in Turkey.

The aim of the network is to design and carry out lobbying, advocacy and visibility activities for the defense of equal rights in Turkey and to support the studies carried out in this field. As of December 2023, the network has 43 members.

Equality Watch Center Türkiye Network Members

NGO

1. May 17 Association
2. Open Space Association - Deep Poverty Network
3. Association for Access to the Right to Fair Trial
4. Anti-Discrimination and Equality Association
6. Bir İz Engelsiz Yaşam Derneği
7. The Civil Society in the Penal System Association

- 8.Denizli Autism Association
- 9.Education Reform Initiative
- 10.Minus 25 Association
- 11.The Federation of Unimpeded Components
- 12.Association for Monitoring Equal Rights
- 13.Lawyers for Universal Rights Association
- 14.Association for Migration Research
- 15.Rights Initiative Association
- 16.Human Rights Agenda Association
- 17.Human Rights Association-Van Branch
- 18.Human Rights Association - Mersin Branch
- 19.Human Rights Association - Şanlıurfa Branch
- 20.Association for Freedom and Equality for Women
- 21.Association for Women's Right to Health in Development
- 22.Kaos Gay and Lesbian Cultural Studies and Solidarity Association
- 23.Lambda Istanbul Lesbian Gay Bisexual Trans Intersex Solidarity Association
- 24.Media and Migration Association
- 25.Social Policies, Gender Identity, and Sexual Orientation Studies Association
- 26.Pink Life LGBTI+ Solidarity Association
- 27.Colorful Hopes Association
- 28.Roma Memory Studies Association
- 29.Roma Rights Association
- 30.Flying Broom Women's Communication and Research Association
- 31.International Civil Society Network Association
- 32.University Queer Research and LGBTI+ Solidarity Association
- 33.Van Hearing-Impaired and Families Association
- 34.Association of Life Memory Freedom
- 35.Zan Foundation for Social, Political and Economic Studies.

BAR

1. Ankara Bar Association
2. Batman Bar Association
3. Diyarbakir Bar Association
4. Eskişehir Bar Association
5. Izmir Bar Association
6. Mardin Bar Association

UNIVERSITY

1. Atılım University - Faculty of Law
- 2-Bilkent University - Human Rights Center

1.2 WHY IS AN ANTI-DISCRIMINATION NETWORK NEEDED? LET'S HEAR FROM THE NETWORK...



We asked members of the Network Against Discrimination why we need to act together #AgainstDiscrimination.

"...the existence of such a center and such a project really excited us all. Because many civil society organisations work in this field, however we do not have a collective knowledge or data pool. Creating such a pool in this center will be very valuable."
Gevriye Atlı (Diyarbakır Bar Association)

"Such coalitions can create work that increases our resolution. "It can enable us to truly see people in their own uniqueness and increase and strengthen our civil society skills and our ability to do human rights work." **Murat Köylü (KAOS GL Association)**

"It is a chance for civil society organisations to come here and have equal status and act in consultation. "This needs to be taken into consideration."
Fatma Bostan Ünsal (Rights Initiative Association)

"We see that disadvantaged groups have become even more vulnerable than before, and existing mechanisms do not work well enough to respond to them. That's why access to justice must be supported by such projects." **Kasım Akbaş (Union of Turkish Bar Associations)**

2.WHAT DO WE DO TOGETHER AGAINST DISCRIMINATION?

2.1 WORKSHOPS AND MEETINGS

We held workshops and meetings to meet the need for civil society organisations (CSOs), bar associations and academics #AgainstDiscrimination and to ensure change and transformation in environments where democracy and freedoms are restricted.

Post-Earthquake Coordination Meetings: Following the February 6, 2023 earthquakes, we held post-earthquake in person and online coordination meetings with members of the Anti-Discrimination Network and made determinations, evaluations and collaborations regarding the needs of the field and civil society organisations.



United Nations Universal Periodic Review Report Preparatory Work: We have started preparations for the United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UPR) stakeholder report in cooperation with the Joint Platform for Human Rights (IHOP) and members of the Network Against Discrimination. We have created an opportunity for organizations working in various thematic areas to come together with our ongoing in person and online meetings. We identified areas where we can report together. The reports drafted in this study, which will continue until the Turkey session to be held in May 2025, will be presented to the UPR committee on September 25, 2024.



Workshop on Effective Handling of Complaints and Cases to Combat Discrimination: (28-29 October 2023) Based on the experience of the Dutch Anti-Discrimination Bureau, we organized an experience sharing workshop to ensure that civil society organisations working against discrimination in Turkey can effectively handle discrimination cases. In the workshop facilitated by Anti-Discrimination Bureau experts, we shared methods to overcome the difficulties encountered in this field and discussed new ways to increase our knowledge and skills. The work will continue until the end of 2024.

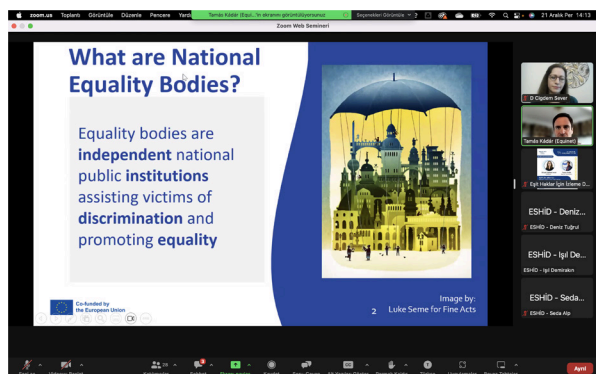
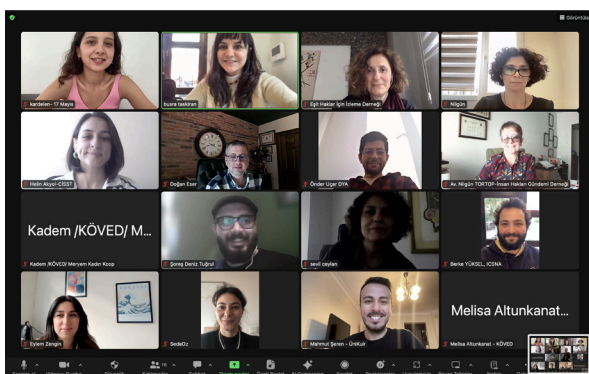
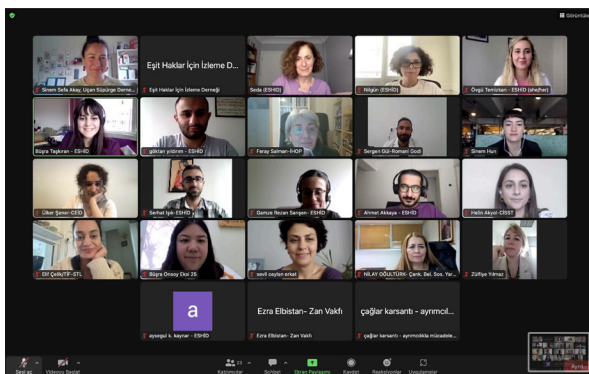
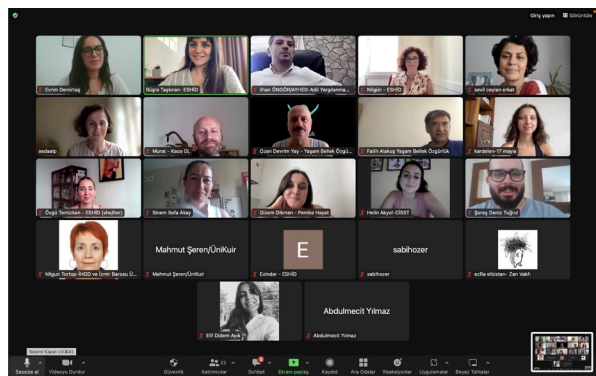
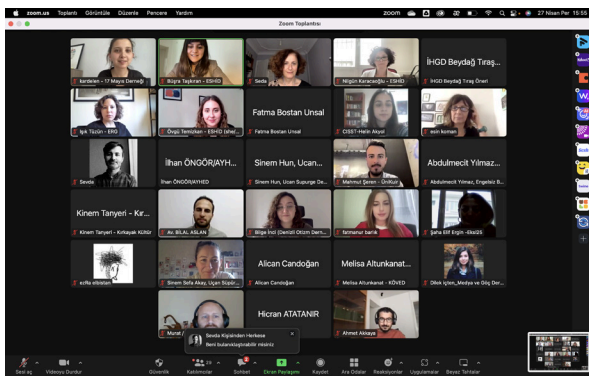


Effective and Strategic Application Training to National Human Rights Mechanisms: We carried out effective and strategic application training to the Human Rights and Equality Institution of Türkiye (HREIT) and the Ombudsman Institution (KDK) together with expert academics. Trainings attended by civil society organisations and bar associations will also continue in 2024.



Online Meetings: Network Against Discrimination members meet online every month. These meetings, where experience transfer and advocacy activities are planned, strengthen communication and cooperation among members.

Webinar: We brought it to the agenda on December 10, World Human Rights Day. Assoc. Dr. Together with Çiğdem Sever, European Equality Institutions Network (EQUINET) Co-Director Tamas Kadar, we evaluated the role of equality institutions and the need for new standards for equality institutions in today's world where discrimination and polarization are increasing.



2.2 DISCRIMINATION APPLICATIONS AND EVALUATION PROCESS

Anyone who has experienced or witnessed discrimination can apply to the Equality Watch Centre.

The grounds of discrimination that are the subject of the application may include the following issues or their intersection areas;

- Gender Identity
- Sexual Orientation
- Based on Religious Belief/Disbelief
- Disability Based
- Race, Ethnicity
- Language Based
- Refugee/Immigration Based
- Based on Political View
- Age

Discrimination Applications; It can be made via the multilingual (Turkish, English, Kurdish and Arabic) application form on our website, via the center's e-mail address or via the phone line.

Applications Made to EWC in 2023

to the Discrimination Application Line, which became operational on December 15, 2022, in 2023 from people who had experienced or witnessed discrimination. Out of the applications, six (6) reported discrimination they had personally experienced, while one (1) was related to discrimination suffered by someone else.

The applicants' grounds of discrimination;

- Two (2) Political Views
- Two (2) Disabilities
- Two (2) Races, Ethnicity
- One (1) Intersectional Discrimination

2.3 ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

2.3.1 CAMPAIGNS

Equality Watch Center ran two campaigns in 2023-24 to stand together #AgainstDiscrimination, to make discrimination visible, and to mobilize responsible institutions on this issue.

- We made an open call to determine the changes HREIT should make and the steps it should take in the post-disaster application process to prevent irreparable and impossible damages after the #6February2023 earthquakes .
- A call was made to the Supreme Electoral Council, HREIT, Political Parties and voters to take the necessary precautions with the #NoMovementAgainstHateSpeech During Election Processes campaign.

PURSUING EQUALITY

The “Pursuing Equality” video series aims to discuss and transform the discriminatory laws, as well as all kinds of procedures and practices in Turkey with human rights defenders.

The first of the 'Pursuing Equality' video series was designed on the basis of a bill proposal that would amend the 24th article of the Constitution titled "Freedom of Religion and Conscience" and the 41st article titled "Protection of the Family and Children's Rights". We evaluated the Constitutional amendment proposal, in which women's and LGBTI+ organizations were not included in the preparation process, with Lawyer Kardelen Yılmaz from the 17 May Association and Lawyer Sema Kendirci Uğurman, Federation of Women's Associations of Turkey.



Kardelen Yilmaz said, "While there is no marriage equality that LGBTI+ people can benefit from, a constitutional amendment stating that the emphasis on marriage can be between men and women, and the use of a word such as "pervert" in the justification of the article, automatically points to hatred and discrimination. The word pervert has no legal equivalent. "It's just a word used by a certain group of people to criminalize LGBTI+ people... Of course, it's a big setback in terms of human rights."



Lawyer Sema Kendirci Uğurman: "If you are changing the Constitution in a country, arrangements must be made to ensure that all segments of the society, especially the other half of the population, that is, women, must participate in it, have a say in it, and intervene in it, and ensure that their own demands are included there. Before we forget, success is possible with organized struggle. Point. "

2. 3. 2. CORPORATE APPLICATIONS

We made six (6) applications to the Human Rights and Equality Institution of Türkiye, which is one of the basic mechanisms in the protection and development of human rights at the national level, in order to create a large-scale social impact and obtain legal gains. We provided legal support to two (2) applications made individually.

Strategic references:

- 1.HREIT to give its opinion on the proposed law, which includes amendment proposals regarding the 24th article of the Constitution titled "Freedom of Religion and Conscience" and the 41st article titled "Protection of the Family and Children's Rights", which will provide constitutional guarantee against discrimination ,
- 2.Following the match between Amedspor and Bursaspor, HREIT made a corporate application covering policy making, guidance and awareness raising to prevent hate and racism in sports.
- 3.Considering the high number of applications received from prisons, HREIT said that the Roma prisoner in Keskin T Type Closed Penal Institution, who received an aggravated life sentence and was suffering from tuberculosis, Application for an institutional recommendation regarding this situation, as his application was decided after his death in prison,
- 4.Application regarding the amendment of the legal regulation of the Address-Based Population Registration System (ABPRS), which poses an obstacle to homeless people's access to the right to vote, in the 2023 Presidential and 28th Term Parliamentary General Elections and the 2024 Local Elections .
- 5.Application regarding the creation of framework recommendations for political parties and media organs to prevent discrimination, hate speech, harassment and marginalization in election processes,
- 6.Regarding the fact that the article of law adopted by The Supreme Election Board (YSK) violates the prohibition of discrimination because it constitutes indirect discrimination in terms of the right to information for voters who do not speak Turkish and hearing-impaired voters.

We made corporate applications.

3. MONITORING AND REPORTING

As the Equality Watch Center, together with our executives and stakeholders, we collect data, monitor and report with different tools to monitor discrimination in Turkey.

3.1 MONITORING DISCRIMINATION

We directed our efforts to monitor discrimination at the local level on the disaster area with the earthquake disaster we experienced in 2023. We analyzed the disaster and its effects on fundamental human rights through regular observation, data collection and reporting.



Field visit report prepared with 6 different civil society organisations in Adana, Adıyaman, Hatay, Gaziantep, Kahramanmaraş, Malatya, Osmaniye, Şanlıurfa provinces on 11-14 February 2023

The report of our visit to you, together with the Roma Memory Studies Association (Romani Godi) and the Civil Dreams Association, in Adana, Adıyaman, Gaziantep, Malatya, Şanlıurfa and Hatay provinces in April 2023.

3.2 MONITORING OF EQUALITY BODIES

EWC carries out data collection studies on the decisions made, reports, recommendations, guides and activities of the Human Rights and Equality Institution of Türkiye. It publishes monitoring reports for National Human Rights Institutions (NHRI).

The contents of our three (5) published monitoring reports are as follows;



Decision Analysis: Vol 1

We prepared an investigation report about the decision of the Human Rights and Equality Institution of Türkiye regarding the singer Gülşen Çolakoğlu, claiming that there was discrimination on the basis of freedom of religious belief and that the artist's words constituted hate speech. Our biggest motivation in reviewing the decision was that HREIT took different decisions in similar applications.

Decision Analysis: Vol 2 & 3

MIA, owner of Saab Café, the first Somali restaurant in Turkey It includes the review of the application made to HREIT on 01.12.2021 on the grounds that "he was mistreated and discriminatory by law enforcement personnel" and HREIT's decision that there was no violation regarding the application, 6 days after the person was deported.

The 3rd Report is about the recommendation decision made by the Ombudsman Institution regarding Child Monitoring Centers (ÇİM) on 16.06.2023. This report was prepared within the scope of the Access to Justice project implemented by AMER.

Decision Analysis: Vol 4

"4. With the monitoring report titled "Human Rights and Equality Institution of Türkiye's Attitudes Regarding Inadmissibility Decisions and Ex-Officio Examination Authority", data regarding HREIT's inadmissibility decisions and the issues on which it used its ex-officio review authority were evaluated. The ratio and justification of HREIT's inadmissibility decision compared to the decisions made during the year were discussed in many aspects. The report also discussed HREIT's different attitudes towards using its ex officio inspection authority.

Decision Analysis: Vol 5

The report titled "Decisions of the Human Rights and Equality Institution of Türkiye Concerning Practices That Lead to Discrimination in Elections", which deals with the functions of national human rights institutions and equality institutions regarding elections, and the inadmissibility decisions regarding our applications due to the need for preventive measures in election processes, national The role of human rights mechanisms in elections was examined with reference to.

BLOG AGAINST DISCRIMINATION:

We have included five different topics in the blog, which consists of articles covering current events in Turkey, decisions made by judicial bodies, and the working areas and transformations of #AgainstDiscrimination network members.

The article "Regarding the Constitutional Court's Decision No. 2023/115" touches upon the silence of HREIT, which could have played an key role in the drafting of a legal regulation that clearly constitutes discrimination. Nejat Taştan, Association for Monitoring Equal Rights (AMER)

“There is something everyone can do to prevent hate crime!” The article titled invites us to take an active role in how we can contribute to making hate crime visible. Dr. Mine Yıldırım , Freedom of Belief Initiative Association

The article titled "Field Visit to the Earthquake Zone: Minority Groups Are Still Under the Ruin" touches on the problems experienced by disadvantaged groups living in the earthquake zone. Büşra Taşkiran, Equality Watch Center- EWC

The article titled “From Discourse to Crime: Hate” deals with the complex and multidimensional aspects of hate speech and crime, which have far-reaching and dangerous consequences. Şoreş Deniz Tuğrul, Equality Monitoring Center- EWC

The article titled “HREIT's Gülşen Decision: She Did Not Recognize Her Own Law” quotes the report of Dr. Zülfiye Yılmaz, who analyzed the decision of the Human Rights and Equality Institution of Türkiye regarding the artist Gülşen Çolakoğlu, who violated the prohibition of discrimination regarding the words she made during her concert.

4.GRANT PROGRAMS and RESEARCH SCHOLARSHIPS

Equality Watch Center provides grant support and research scholarships to civil society organisations and academics working in the field of discrimination.

4.1 ANTI-DISCRIMINATION GRANT PROGRAM

In 2023, EWC Anti-Discrimination Grant Program aims to strengthen the capacity of civil society organisations carrying out rights-based work to handle applications in cases of discrimination, to file strategic lawsuits, to establish relationships with National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), to network for anti-discrimination studies and to establish collaborations. He started . The grant program, which aims to combat discrimination and support more effective, independent national human rights mechanisms, finances six (6) projects for a maximum of 12 months between 2023-2024 in order to promote cooperation between CSOs and bar associations or lawyers.

Supported civil society organisations and project details (activities) are as follows:

Federation of Disabled Components:They will carry out studies to make visible the discrimination faced by disabled people living in the region where the Federation operates.



Denizli Autism Association and Istanbul Autism Volunteers Association:“Autistic rights are human rights!” On the path they set out with the slogan, they will popularize the rights-based approach among civil society organisations working in the field of autism.



Pir Sultan Abdal Association-Antalya Branch and Antalya Bar Association:They will monitor discrimination, grudge and hatred practices against Alevi women and ensure that these are forwarded to national and international human rights mechanisms.



Roma Memory Studies Association (Romani Godi): They will establish collaborations with bar associations and civil society organisations regarding the inequality and discrimination experienced by Roma people in accessing basic human rights and justice. They will work with bar associations and lawyers to eliminate the "lack of awareness" that prevents Roma from accessing justice mechanisms.



Open Space Association - Deep Poverty Network: They will empower individuals in deep poverty conditions to access tools or people to defend their legal rights against discrimination and rights violations.



Free Colors Association: As the only LGBTI+ association in the Southern Marmara region, they will carry out work to strengthen access to justice for LGBTI+ people living in Bursa and surrounding provinces.

4.2 RESEARCH SCHOLARSHIPS

With the grant provided for academic research, academics are included in the work of the Equality Watch Center (EWC) and it is aimed to support them in filling the gap in equality and discrimination studies in Turkey.

Within the scope of the Research Grant Program for equality and combating discrimination, the Equality Watch Center funds three (3) studies for a maximum of 12 months between 2023-2024.

Supported Research:

- 1- Rights of Young Roma Women in Türkiye and Romania: A Comparative Analysis, Arda Öke- Bilkent University
- 2- Fighting Discrimination Against the Poor: Evidence-Based Solutions and Social Awareness, Nazlı Hazal- Middle East Technical University
- 3- Comparative Analysis of Immigrant Rights: Evaluation of Anti-Discrimination Laws and Human Rights Protection Mechanisms in Turkey and France", Associate Professor Ozan Selçuk-Recep Tayyip Erdoğan University



5. 2024 ACTIVITY PLAN - BIRD'S EYE VIEW

- Together Against Discrimination Network Meetings
- Anti-Discrimination Bulletin (Quarterly)
- Podcast Against Discrimination
- National Human Rights Institutions Monitoring Reports
- Effective and Strategic Application Training to National Human Rights Mechanisms
- Training on Effective Handling of Complaints and Cases with the Dutch Anti-Discrimination Office
- Sub-Grant and Research Program (Continued)
- International Conference Against Discrimination (18-19 October, Ankara)

COOPERATING ORGANIZATIONS

- Union of Turkish Bar Associations (TBB), Ankara, Türkiye
- Atılım University Faculty of Law, Ankara, Türkiye
- Anti- Discrimination Bureau , Netherlands

ABBREVIATIONS

ABPRS	Address Based Population Registration System
AMER	Association for Monitoring Equal Rights
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EWC	Equality Watch Center
EQUINET	European Network of Equality Bodies
HREIT	Human Rights and Equality Institution of Türkiye
IHOP	Human Rights Joint Platform
KDK	The Ombudsman Institution of the Republic of Türkiye
NHC	Netherlands Helsinki Committee
NHRI	National Human Rights Institutions
TBB	Union of Turkish Bar Associations
YSK	The Supreme Election Board

