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# Human rights abusers re-elected to Turkey's Council of Judges and Prosecutors



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President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan made his four appointments to the Council of Judges and Prosecutors (HSK) on Thursday, confirming the names of those likely to dominate the Turkish judiciary until 2025.

Existing HSK members Halil Koç and Mehmet Akif Ekinici were re-selected, while Trabzon district court president İbrahim Kolcu and deputy chief prosecutor of Istanbul Ömer Faruk Yıldırım join the council for the first time, according to the decision published in the Official Gazette.

As it stands, the HSK consists of 13 members. Four of these are appointed by the president, while two places are reserved for the minister and deputy minister of justice. The remaining seven

**Download Ahval App** seats are elected by parliament, which on Tuesday reached a compromise over a shared list of candidates.

The last election saw the ruling coalition of Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) and the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) fail to secure enough seats to make unilateral HSK appointments. But the opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) and Good Party (İYİP) have wasted a golden opportunity by taking the AKP's offer of selecting three of the seven HSK appointments from parliament, putting forward Ömür Topaç, Sinan Esen and Cumhur Şahin.

Although sharing HSK seats along political party lines is bad enough, the opposition is now complicit in re-electing figures involved in gross human rights violations. This includes, for example, Hamit Kocabey, the lawyer of MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli, who has served on the council since 2017. In this time, he signed several decrees dismissing judges and prosecutors without due process and is believed to be behind the investigation into a judge who summoned Bahçeli to court in March to give evidence in a criminal case.

Aysel Demirel, who was selected by parliament with the AKP's backing, served on the HSK between 2014 and 2017, and similarly ousted fellow members of the judiciary with little regard for their legal rights. Bilal Temel, another AKP pick, is a senior ministry of justice bureaucrat and well known Erdoğan loyalist.

The track record of the opposition's appointments is little better. Omur Topaç from the CHP's quota also served on the HSK from 2014 and 2017, backing arbitrary dismissals while promoting those responsible for the spurious cases against CHP member of parliament Enis Berberoğlu, CHP Istanbul provincial chair Canan Kaftancıoğlu, and liberal philanthropist Osman Kavala.

Sinan Esen, put forward by the CHP and İYİP, founded the Platform for Judicial Unity, which according to the International Commission of Jurists has been used by the AKP government to

**Download Ahval App** exert influence over the judiciary since 2014. Ergun Sahin, appointed to the HSK with the support of the AKP, is an executive member of the platform.

Under the human rights action plan announced by Erdogan in May 2021, the AKP government promised to ensure the judiciary's independence and impartiality. But the way new HSK members have been chosen, as well as their personal histories, makes a mockery of this promise.

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