

# State of emergency must be lifted for 'credible elections' in Turkey, says UN rights chief

Long-term restrictions on “freedoms of expression, assembly and association” are incompatible with the holding of “credible elections” in Turkey, said the United Nations human rights chief on Wednesday, calling on the Government to lift its extended state of emergency.

“Over the past two years, through successive states of emergency, the [space for dissent in Turkey has shrunk](#) considerably, with at least 29 more journalists jailed on terrorism offences in just the last week of April alone,” said Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, the UN [High Commissioner for Human Rights](#), in a statement.

During the 18-month period of emergency rule, which was declared following an attempted coup in 2016, nearly 160,000 people have been arrested; 152,000 civil servants dismissed, many arbitrarily; and teachers, judges and lawyers dismissed or prosecuted.

“The heavy police presence and arrests during the May Day protests also demonstrated yet again the severely limited space for freedom of peaceful assembly in the country,” added Zeid.

*“It is difficult to imagine how credible elections can be held in an environment where dissenting views and challenges to the ruling party are penalized so severely.” – Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights*

On 19 April, a day after the Turkish Government called for early parliamentary and presidential elections, it announced its seventh extension of emergency laws, which suspend the country’s obligations under several articles of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights relating to the free expression, assembly, and association.

“It is difficult to imagine how credible elections can be held in an environment where dissenting views and challenges to the ruling party are penalized so severely,” underscored Mr. Zeid.

In a recent [report](#), the [UN Human Rights Office](#) said the state of emergency’s routine renewals were eroding civil society, the judiciary and the ability of media to hold politicians accountable in the country.

“Elections held in an environment where democratic freedoms and the rule of law are compromised would raise questions about their legitimacy, and result in more uncertainty and instability,” Mr. Zeid explained.

“It is in the interests of the people of Turkey that the country’s constitutional order is fully restored, and that human rights and fundamental freedoms are fully respected, in law and practice,” concluded the High Commissioner.