

In this week's *Türkiye in Focus*;

- Researcher Mehmet Kılıç wrote about how the protests in Iran are viewed from Türkiye.
- Türkiye is expected to play a significant role in Black Sea security.
- In the "Terror-Free Türkiye" process, developments in Syria are being closely monitored.

Iran's Protests Through Türkiye's Lens



(Fatemeh Bahrami - Anadolu Agency)

Researcher Mehmet Kılıç wrote about how the protests in Iran are viewed from Türkiye.

Since 28 December 2025, the Islamic Republic of Iran has been experiencing demonstrations over mainly economic issues, including the cost of living and currency fluctuations. These demonstrations have spread rapidly across the country and highlighted widespread discontent in society. As a neighbouring state, Türkiye is naturally following these events and evaluating them in the context of regional stability.

Türkiye's stance rests on a carefully formulated framework that balances relations with its Iranian neighbour and regional security interests. When focusing on Iranian issues, Türkiye stresses that these matters should be handled internally, without international intervention. Based on their stance, Türkiye points out that it is critical to recognise social and economic rights while also noting that international meddling might increase tensions, unleashing intolerable instability.

In this context, the Foreign Minister, Hakan Fidan, told TRT Haber on 9 January 2026 that long-lasting sanctions-related

economic challenges in Iran had paved the way for social unrest. Emphasising the risk of exploitation from outside, Fidan said: "We want the Iranian people to remain safe and not to be subjected to attacks. We hope that Iran's problems with the United States and the West can be resolved through negotiations as soon as possible." He further warned about the possible instrumentalisation of the situation by rival actors and emphasised: "Israel will not achieve the outcome it expects from this process."

Similarly, AK Party spokesperson Ömer Çelik noted that any external interference would have grave consequences for the region, underlining that "any kind of external interference would lead to extremely negative consequences for our region." This stance reflects Türkiye's broader concern that instability in Iran could have far-reaching spillover effects beyond the immediate realm of their bilateral relations.

It is well known that Türkiye has long pursued a foreign policy grounded in regional stability and dialogue and continues to do so today. In this context, Türkiye's foreign policy demonstrates a balancing approach to avoid chaos and uncertainty in the immediate regional environment. Within this framework, Ankara maintains close, ongoing communication with Iranian authorities while pursuing constructive efforts to ease existing challenges. From Ankara's perspective, uncertainties in Iran constitute a factor that requires careful monitoring, given their possible repercussions for border security, migration, and regional energy and trade connectivity. Accordingly, Ankara pursues a foreign policy that prioritises dialogue and diplomacy over security-oriented responses, stressing that Iran's existing challenges should be managed through internal political mechanisms and viewing external intervention as counterproductive to regional peace and stability.

If Peace Is Achieved in Ukraine, Black Sea Security Will Be Under Türkiye's Control

Details are still emerging from the January 6 summit of the Coalition of Volunteers held in Paris, where participating countries reached a broad understanding on post-war security arrangements for Ukraine. While the meeting stopped short of announcing a single, unified framework, it produced a shared political direction: coalition members would be prepared to take coordinated action to help safeguard Ukraine's security in the event of peace. The emphasis appears to be on deterrence, maritime stability, and long-term reassurance rather than immediate combat deployments.

Within this context, statements by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Defence have drawn particular attention. According to Turkish officials, the idea of Türkiye assuming a leading role in ensuring security in the Black Sea is firmly on the table. For Ankara, Black Sea security has been a top-tier priority since the very beginning of the war. Türkiye's naval capacity, operational experience, and control of key maritime chokepoints position the Turkish navy as one of the few regional forces capable of taking on such a leadership role in a credible and sustained manner.



(Cem Tekkeşinoğlu - Anadolu Agency)

Recent incidents have only reinforced this focus. Sea mines and drones drifting as far as Türkiye's Black Sea coastline have underlined the direct risks posed by instability in the region, sharpening Ankara's sense of urgency. At the same time, one major question remains unresolved: whether any Turkish military presence would extend onto Ukrainian land territory. For now, this issue remains deliberately ambiguous, suggesting that Türkiye's prospective role is more likely to focus on maritime security and regional stabilisation than on boots on the ground in Ukraine.

The "Terror-Free Türkiye" Process Faces Its Toughest Test



(Izz Aldien Alqasem - Anadolu Agency)

Last week's limited Syrian army operation, which wrested control of three SDF-held neighbourhoods in Aleppo, has reintroduced the logic of facts on the ground into an already fragile equation. From Ankara's perspective, these developments underscore a long-held view: that only a strengthened central authority in Damascus can act as a unifying force capable of preserving Syria's unity and territorial integrity. Türkiye has consistently framed this stance not as an endorsement of every move by the Syrian regime, but as a strategic necessity in a country where fragmentation has proven to be the main driver of instability.

Against this backdrop, Ankara's criticism of the SDF's maximalist demands has sharpened. Statements from MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli, in particular, reflect a belief that the SDF is deliberately playing for time, refusing compromise in the hope of capitalising on a potential Israel-linked regional disruption. Within this reading, the SDF's strategy is portrayed not merely as rigid bargaining, but as a calculated attempt to keep its options open amid wider turmoil fuelling claims of covert alignment with Israel.

Domestically, the past week has been the most serious pause in the "Terror-Free Türkiye" process so far, as differences in tone and expectations between the DEM Party and the government have become more visible. Yet, it is equally clear that all sides are aware of the risks of derailing the process, opting instead for carefully balanced rhetoric. President Erdoğan was reported to have suggested that developments in Aleppo could even create an opening to implement the 10 March understanding, a view shared by experts who argue that Damascus's military momentum might clear the way for diplomacy. Tensions in Syria have not yet crystallised into a fixed trajectory: if steps toward compromise emerge, the process in Türkiye could regain speed; if not, prolonged uncertainty risks turning it into a drawn-out and easily poisoned endeavour.

Highlights

- Vice President Cevdet Yılmaz met with the U.S. Ambassador to Ankara and Special Envoy for Syria, Tom Barrack. The talks focused on Iran, Syria, and the second phase of the Gaza peace plan.
- ASELSAN, a flagship company of Türkiye's defence industry, became the first Turkish firm to reach a market valuation of US\$30 billion.
- Central Bank Governor Fatih Karahan said that some short-term volatility in inflation may occur over the next two months but stressed that the downward trend has become more evident. He underlined that tight monetary policies will be maintained until price stability is firmly secured.

Recent Publications by TRT World Research Centre

- [Iran's Current Protests: Economic Pressures and Institutional Strains](#) Podcast Episode by Mehmet Kılıç



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