

(English version)

Question for written answer E-001163/25
to the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
Sakis Arnaoutoglou (S&D), Yannis Maniatis (S&D), Nikos Papandreou (S&D)
(19 March 2025)

Subject: Arrest of the Mayor of Istanbul, Ekrem İmamoğlu

On 19 March 2025, the Turkish authorities arrested the Mayor of Istanbul, Ekrem İmamoğlu, along with around 100 other people, including journalists and business executives. The accusations against him include leadership of a criminal organisation, bribery, manipulating public tenders and aiding a terrorist organisation. The day before his arrest, his degree was annulled in a politically motivated decision, effectively barring him from running in the Turkish presidential elections.

His arrest and this decision come at a time when the Mayor of Istanbul is considered to be one of President Erdoğan's main political rivals and was a favourite in the primary elections of the Republican People's Party for the upcoming presidential elections. These developments have raised serious concerns about the transparency of the judicial process, respect for democratic procedures, the situation of the rule of law and freedom of the press in Türkiye.

In view of the above, and given the fact that Türkiye holds EU candidate country status, can the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy say:

1. Is the arrest of the Mayor of Istanbul compatible with Türkiye's status as a candidate country and how does she intend to react?
2. What additional measures does the EU intend to take to ensure that Türkiye respects democratic principles, the rule of law and human rights?
3. In light of the latest developments, does the Vice-President of the Commission/High Representative consider Türkiye to be a reliable partner for the EU?

Submitted: 19.3.2025

Answer given by Ms Kos on behalf of the European Commission
(28 May 2025)

The arrests of Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu and many protestors give rise to questions regarding Türkiye's adherence to its long-established democratic tradition.

As a Council of Europe member and EU candidate, Türkiye must uphold the highest standards in the protection of fundamental rights, respect of democratic principles and the rule of law. The rights of elected officials, as well as the right for peaceful demonstrations need to be respected.

On 19 March 2025, the High Representative/Vice-President and the Commissioner for Enlargement issued a Joint Statement ⁽¹⁾ noting that respect for fundamental rights and the rule of law are essential for the EU accession process and will continue to be an integral part of EU-Türkiye relations.

The President of the Commission also answered a media question with a similar message. In view of the current developments, the Commissioner for Enlargement has cancelled a visit to the Antalya Diplomatic Forum that was planned from 11 to 13 April 2025.

Türkiye is a key partner for the EU and a candidate country. However, accession negotiations with Türkiye have remained at a standstill since 2018, in line with the Council Conclusions.

The EU's serious concerns about the continued deterioration of democratic standards, the rule of law, the independence of the judiciary and respect for fundamental rights have not been yet addressed as confirmed most recently by the December 2024 Council Conclusions on enlargement ⁽²⁾.

The issue will continue to be raised on all levels with the Turkish authorities.

⁽¹⁾ https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/news/joint-statement-high-representativevice-president-kallas-and-commissioner-kos-recent-events-2025-03-19_en.

⁽²⁾ <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-16983-2024-INIT/en/pdf>.