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Human rights violations have been occurring at an alarming rate since the coup attempt in Turkey in 2016. The state of emergency that was imposed right after the coup attempt has facilitated the worsening of the human rights situation and the erosion of the rule of law.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 22 emergency decrees were promulgated, bypassing parliamentary scrutiny. Many of these decrees contain provisions that fall short of basic human rights safeguards.

Interference of the executive with the work of the judiciary has become common practice. Arbitrary mass dismissals of civil servants and private sector employees, arbitrary closure of civil society organizations including human rights organizations and media, arbitrary detention of people, the use of torture and ill-treatment during pre-trial detention, severe restrictions of the rights to freedoms of expression and movement, arbitrary expropriation of private property and collective punishment targeting family members of individuals suspected of offences are some of the alarming trends.

Following the coup attempt, more than 150,000 civil servants were dismissed, among them were teachers and academics. This has significantly affected the education sector and the right to education. Some 570 lawyers were arrested, 300 journalists were arrested on the grounds that their publications contained apologist sentiments regarding terrorism. There are now 178 journalists behind bars. A particularly worrying pattern is detaining women just before or immediately after giving birth. UN estimates that around 600 women with young children are being held in detention. In most cases they were arrested as associates of their husbands.

The state of emergency was lifted after June elections but after his elections victory Erdogan now controls every aspect of state and society and he can continue the practices under the emergency rule. Some hoped that after the election victory, Erdogan would ease the repression to fix the country's damaged international image and attract foreign investment. But the

opposite seems to be happening. Turkish economy is struggling, some argue that it is on the verge of a collapse, making Erdogan vulnerable. He is afraid of a societal backlash. So the government has become more repressive in its response to peaceful demonstrations, it continues to silence critics and squeeze media.

Just few weeks ago, the Turkish police forcefully dispersed a group of activists, some of them women in their 80s, breaking up a regular vigil in Istanbul to protest the forced disappearances of hundreds of people. The group has been holding these meetings since 1995.

Last week, Turkish police have detained hundreds of workers protesting over labor conditions at Istanbul's new airport. A man recently committed a suicide saying his life was not worth living when he could not afford to buy his son a pair of pants. The journalist who covered the story was detained.

So I think if the country's economic troubles worsen, we should expect even a more dramatic decline in the human rights situation. And the US has to decide how to handle Turkey. So far it has either ignored the country's authoritarian turn to keep Ankara on board in the fight against ISIS or adopted a very narrow focus and implemented ineffective measures to communicate Washington's redlines.

In 2017, for instance, the Trump administration took an unprecedented step and suspended visa services in Turkey after a Turkish employee of the U.S. Consulate in Istanbul was detained for alleged links to Fethullah Gulen, a Pennsylvania-based cleric whom Ankara blames for a coup attempt in 2016. The visa move was unwise as it targeted Turkish people, not the government. But it was still a significant move and provided the US with leverage. But After three months, the US ended the visa restrictions without getting anything tangible in return.

After Turkey failed to free the American Pastor who has been in jail for over a year, Trump administration slapped sanctions on two senior members of Turkey's government, freezing the officials' assets in the United States, prohibiting them from traveling to the U.S., and preventing from engaging in any financial transactions with American citizens. This too was a symbolic move.

The US administration has better tools at its disposal, some are already suggested by the Congress such as blocking the sale of F35s if Turkey goes ahead with the purchase of Russian defense systems. Or as proposed by senators, opposing financing for Turkey from the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

Now that Turkish economy is in trouble, the European countries have leverage over Turkey. Germany is Turkey's biggest trading partner. The countries are now in talks to cultivate stronger relations. Germany is even considering helping Turkey's economy. Erdogan will visit Germany this week. Germany should help Turkey economically but attach a conditionality. The Netherlands is equally important for Turkey and the two countries are now mending ties. These suggest Turkey is too invested in the Western security and economic structure to turn completely towards the east. Russia invited Turkey to join Vostok military exercise for instance but Turkey only sent military observers instead of actively participating in the drill. This also suggests Turkey values its NATO membership and does not want to burn bridges. All this gives the US significant leverage over Turkey. Washington should use sticks and carrots to address Turkey's human rights abuses, outreach to the Turkish public and invest in the country's civil society.