

REPORT: INCREMENTAL REDUCTIONS IN MILITARY BUDGET CREATES ENOUGH FUNDS TO FIGHT SOCIAL PROBLEMS



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

KAHİP is administered by the Istanbul Bilgi University Civil Society Institutions Education and Research Unit (İBİGİ STK), and this platform has 52 civil society organizations as members.

The size of the army is usually one of the most controversial issues for Turkey, as growing numbers of Turks have started questioning the wisdom of continuing to feed one of the largest armies in the world. The KAHİP report investigated this issue, and it found that Turkey is currently the 11th largest army in the world in terms of the number of soldiers it has, and in size ranks second in Europe after Russia, which has 1.5 million soldiers. Today, there are almost 615,000 men at arms in Turkey, and the world number one, China, has roughly 3 million troops.

The report provided a classification of expenditure on the military, using a Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) method to determine the level of ease in monitoring it. According to this, 78 percent of the government's expenditure on the military is announced publicly and is open to inspections. Some 7 percent of it is partially open and Parliament's authority to inspect this percentage has restrictions. The remaining 15 percent is completely untraceable, and hence the size of the spending in this part is largely based on estimates, said the report.

Comparing the military expenditure share in the gross domestic product (GDP), Turkey stands in ninth place in the world with 2.33 percent, despite the steadily declining rate of spending since 2003. There is another point the report underlined about this

The size of the army is one of the most controversial issues for Turkey, as growing numbers of Turks have started questioning the wisdom of continuing to maintain one of the largest armies in the world

rate, which is that the share of the military in the GDP was far less than the share enjoyed by the education (4.1 percent) and health (4.55 percent) sectors. Until 2003, the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) were getting the lion's share of total government expenditure.

Three-quarters of the total money spent by the military go to pay wages and other expenditures by the staff, including goods and services procurement to keep up the troops, whereas only the remaining 25 percent goes to the modernization of the army and capital expenditures, the report found.

According to the survey, on the amount spent for social protection out of GDP, Turkey scored even less than half of the OECD average, with 13.41 percent, compared to 28.1 percent for the OECD. These data records are from 2012.

KAHİP said the social protection expenditures that cover spending in the areas of social aid, social services, social se-

curity and health constituted 11.5 percent of GDP during the period between 2006 and 2008 and were slightly over 13 percent of GDP between 2009 and 2012. This rate rose to approximately 14.06 percent, the report found. Considering nations whose economies display similarities to that of Turkey, this rate must at least be 18 percent, the report asserted.

The share of aid to the poor compared to GDP stands at 1.11 percent for 2013. When the current transfers for health spending for the poor are incorporated into these figures, the share rises to 1.67 percent, the report said. It called on the government to raise this number, recalling that regular payments to families in real need is already in the election statements of almost all political parties.

When it comes to per capita health expenditures, Turkey is still the seventh nation from the bottom of the list, despite some recent positive developments in the World Health Organization (WHO) logs for Turkey, the survey stated. The share of health expenditures in the GDP exceeded 5 percent only in 2009, the report underlined, adding that this figure became 4.68 percent in 2013.

The report said any reduction in health spending is unacceptable. Additionally, the report found that only 14.58 percent of total health spending in Turkey goes to efforts for preventive services, and administrative spending, while the rest is spent on medical purchases and treatment costs.

Another stunning number in the KAHİP report was related to the general health insurance premium collections. The accrued amount of premiums totaled TL 7.3 billion for the past year, whereas the state was able to collect TL 350 million of this figure, the report found. It also said the social security premiums of all citizens

whose monthly revenues are below even minimum wage, including the jobless, must be paid by the government.

The report's findings gave no cause for celebration when it came to allocations for the judicial system, either. Per capita court and prosecution expenditures stood at 15.9 euros for Turkey whereas this number is three-and-a-half times higher at 52.16 euros for the European Union. The survey used data for the latter from a survey by the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ).

Similarly, while the number of lawsuits a judge sees in a year in Europe is 200 on average, the number is 780 in Turkey. KAHİP also found out how poor Turkey is performing concerning the wages of judges. The average annual income of a novice judge in Europe is 25,000 euros while it is 16,000 euros in Turkey. Switzerland tops this list, where a novice judge earns nearly 101,000 euros per year in this country.

The report criticized the budget allocations prepared for internal security. Between 2006 and 2013, the volume of funds spared for domestic security needs registered an increase of 107 percent for the Interior Ministry, 41 percent for the National Police Department and 38 percent for the National Intelligence Organization (MIT). The National Security Council (MGK) was the only institution that saw its budget decline by 8 percent in the given time period, the report found.

Concerning the amount of funds allocated to the military, KAHİP cited numbers provided by the SIPRI, an independent resource on global security. Turkey has taken ninth place in a list of countries with the highest military expenditures, up from 12th in 2011, the survey noted. The most recent data for these expenditures are from 2012. *Istanbul Today's Zaman*