

Turkey In Turmoil: Imamoglu's Arrest Sparks Largest Protests in a Decade

Turkey is at a political crossroads.

In March 2025, Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu—widely seen as President Erdogan's strongest political rival—was arrested on corruption charges. The arrest came just one day before he was set to be officially nominated as the opposition's presidential candidate. Many within Turkey and abroad view the move as a calculated step to sideline a major challenger ahead of the 2028 elections.

The response has been swift—and massive.

Over 1,800 people have been detained nationwide, including students, opposition figures, and seven journalists, as tens of thousands have taken to the streets in defiance of protest bans. What began as a protest over Imamoglu's arrest has now grown into a broader expression of public frustration over democratic backsliding, media suppression, and economic instability.

Despite government crackdowns, the momentum doesn't appear to be slowing. The opposition CHP has called for what it dubs the "largest open-air referendum" in Istanbul—essentially turning public protest into a form of civic voting.

Markets briefly reacted with volatility, and concerns over the rule of law, judicial independence, and foreign investment stability are mounting. International pressure is increasing, with statements of concern from the United States, United Nations, and Council of Europe.

So what's next for Turkey?

Erdogan's grip remains strong, but the arrest of Imamoglu may backfire, galvanizing an opposition that had been fragmented. If early elections are called—or even if they aren't—Turkey may be heading into its most unpredictable political season in decades.

This moment is more than just a legal battle—it's a litmus test for Turkish democracy.