

Protest



14

FEB

11:53 UTC

Turkey Tactical: DEM Party calls for demonstration at Istanbul's Aksaray Square at 18:00 on February 15; avoid non-essential travel to vicinity of protest

Current Situation:

- The Istanbul branch of the Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party (DEM Party) has called for a demonstration at Aksaray Square in Istanbul's Fatih district at 18:00 (local time) on February 15.
- The gathering is intended to mark the 27th anniversary of the February 15, 1999, capture of Abdullah Ocalan, the imprisoned leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK).
- The party presents the anniversary as an opportunity to criticize Turkish state policies on the Kurdish issue and to advocate renewed peace efforts.



Source: [DEM Party](#)

Assessments & Forecast:

1. This comes amid several DEM-organized pro-Kurdish protests in Turkey in recent weeks, including demonstrations expressing solidarity with Kurdish-led forces in Syria. In the context of the February 15 commemoration, the DEM asserts that a credible peace initiative with the PKK is untenable so long as Ocalan remains imprisoned. In February 2025, Ocalan issued his “Call for Peace and Democratic Society,” urging the PKK to disarm and dissolve. However, DEM maintains that the talks framework since then has remained opaque and imbalanced, with the PKK taking front-loaded steps toward disarmament in the absence of clearly defined reciprocal political or constitutional reforms from Ankara.
2. **FORECAST:** Amid heightened pro-Kurdish mobilization in recent weeks, the planned protest is likely to attract a turnout in the low to mid hundreds. The gathering carries an elevated risk of arrests and low-level unrest, given precedent and the authorities’ consistent practice of dispersing pro-Kurdish demonstrations. Security forces are therefore expected to maintain a reinforced presence around Aksaray Square to monitor proceedings. Should participants engage in conduct deemed unlawful or disorderly, police are likely to intervene to disperse the crowd and detain individuals. Localized traffic disruptions are anticipated in the vicinity of Aksaray Square during the evening hours of February 15.

Recommendations:

Those operating or residing in Istanbul on February 15 are advised to avoid nonessential travel to the vicinity of the slated DEM protest in Fatih, given the elevated risk of police crackdown and associated unrest.