



INFO PACK

Local Elections in Turkey 2019

TRT WORLD
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Abbreviations

AK Party: Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi)

CHP: Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi)

DSP: Democratic Left Party (Demokratik Sol Parti)

HDP: Peoples' Democratic Party (Halkların Demokratik Partisi)

İYİ Party: Good Party (İyi Parti)

MHP: Nationalist Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi)

YSK: Supreme Election Board (Yüksek Seçim Kurulu)

Introduction

Turkey will go to the polls on March 31 2019 to elect their local representatives. Depending on where they live, people will vote for mayors, municipal council members, provincial assembly members, neighbourhood representatives (mukhtar) and council of elders. The upcoming local elections will be the first under Turkey's new presidential system. Although there are no major variations between the current and previous local elections, political parties have been following the alliance strategy as they did for the parliamentary and presidential elections held on June 24th 2018, following the adoption of the Presidential System.

The local elections will be held across 30 metropolitan municipalities, 51 provincial municipalities, 922 district municipalities, 32,105 neighbourhoods and 18,306 villages. The People's Alliance, composed of the AK Party (Justice and Development Party) and MHP (Nationalist Movement Party), agreed to cooperate in all of 30 metropolitan municipalities in addition to 21 provincial municipalities. The CHP (Re-

publican People's Party) and İYİ Party (Good Party) led Nation's Alliance, on the other hand, will be co-operating in 23 metropolitan municipalities and 27 provincial municipalities. In Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir, Turkey's 3 largest cities, the AK Party's and CHP's mayoral candidates will be competing, with the MHP supporting the former's candidates and the İYİ Party supporting the latter's.

Local elections in Turkey have always been perceived as the cornerstone of politics in the country by political parties, individual politicians and voters alike. This info pack delves into the question of why local elections are an important phenomena in Turkish political life. It also provides the profiles of the major political parties running in the elections and their manifestos for the upcoming local elections. In addition, essential information about the March 31 polls is laid out with a particular attention to the major cities, namely Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Diyarbakır, Adana and Balıkesir. Lastly, the info pack explores measures taken to ensure security for the election, information regarding election integrity and how votes are cast and regulated.

Anatomy of Local Elections in Turkey

There are two layers of government in Turkey: the central government and local governments. Local governments are elected through popular vote for a five-year term. Local governments' authority to govern in their respective districts is protected by the constitution. However, the constitution also entitles the central government to watch over local authorities in order to ensure the integrity of the administration in the country. Regarding the relationship between central and local governments, Turkey follows the rules and standards of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, as it is one of the signatories of the charter. The charter sets out the standards for protecting the rights of local authorities and requires states to comply with a number of conditions, principles and practices.

The first municipality dates back to the 19th century in Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire, where the first municipal entity – known as the “Şehremaneti” – was established in 1854. From then on, local government has played a vital role in the social, economic and political fabric of Turkey. According to official figures, in 2018 local governments were responsible for approximately 35 percent of total public investments in areas such as transportation, healthcare, arts, culture, sports and tourism. Furthermore, since the 1990s municipal governments have been the corner stone of the social welfare system in the country. This includes providing a range of social services to the poor, including healthcare,

education, food and clothing. Therefore, one can suggest that the citizen-state relationship begins at the local level between the public and municipal governments.

Municipalities in Turkey have various type of responsibilities including - but not limited to - infrastructure, sanitation, fire and rescue services, local public security services, public health, providing construction permits, supervising the pricing of retail markets, opening up public bazaars, establishing industrial sites, promoting education, providing vocational courses and establishing public libraries. In addition to those, municipalities are also liable for transportation, providing religious and wedding services, establishing student dormitories, protecting and renovating historical artefacts and opening up art and sports centres.

From the ruling political party's perspective, local elections are seen as a litmus test for the performance of the central government. For opposition parties, it is a springboard for the next general elections. Local elections are also significant for individual politicians. Many politicians in national politics in Turkey have a background in local politics. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, for instance, won the municipal elections in Istanbul in 1994 and it was his performance as the mayor of Istanbul that brought him into the forefront of Turkish politics.



Source: Aytaç Ünal - AA



Source: Şahin Oktay - AA

Voting Behaviour

Voter behaviour in general is studied from various theoretical perspectives. The most prominent models are the rational (economic), psychological (partisanship) and sociological (social cleavages) models. The rational model suggests that voters punish or reward the incumbent government for their economic performance on the basis of their self-interested calculations. The psychological model focuses on voters' previous political and ideological affiliation. Proponents of this model claim that partisanship is the most powerful explanatory tool in determining the causes of voter behaviour. The sociological model on the other hand, argues that the social cleavages, such as ethnicity, religion, class and occupation, are the sources of why voters decide to vote for one party but not another.

Voter behaviour studies regarding local and general elections in Turkey have traditionally utilized the sociological model. Sociology professor Şerif Mardin's renowned 'centre-periphery' explanation of Turkish society has been at the forefront of these studies. According to this explanation, the centre consists of a wealthier and generally more secular segment of the population while the periphery is composed of relatively poor and conservative people. Other studies that apply the sociological model to their analysis focus on the left-right divergence/economic ideology and ethnic and religious identity amongst the Turk-

ish public, suggesting that voters cast their votes based on their position on the ideological spectrum, ethnicity and/or level of religiosity.

The economic model has also been applied in explaining the Turkish electorate's voting behaviour. These models suggest that voters consider the previous and current economic performance of the incumbent government when casting their votes. There are also other studies looking into impacts of family and social environment on political affiliation and the resulting voting behaviour of the Turkish electorate. Additionally, security concerns of citizens have – from time to time – had a significant impact on voting behaviour. As numerous studies have shown, the Turkish electorate's sensitivity to terrorism and security can significantly affect their voting decisions.

Apart from the factors listed above, the profiles of the mayoral candidates greatly shape the voter's decisions. The importance of candidate profiles is more evident in smaller cities and districts whereas party preference has a greater effect on voters' decisions in metropolitan cities. All in all, voters take the political party (its leader, cadre and programme), the candidate, the current agenda of the country, religion, ethnicity, economy, ideology into consideration and form their decision on the basis of their priorities.

How Local Elections Work in Turkey?

- Local elections are regulated according to the Local Electoral Law (Law 2972) which determines the rules before, during and after the election.

- In local elections, people have a different number of votes depending on the type of district they live in.

- People who live in a metropolitan city (cities with over 750 thousand residents) will cast their votes for:

- Metropolitan municipality mayor
- District mayor
- Municipal Council members
- Neighbourhood Representative (*mukhtar*) and Council of Elders

- People who live in cities (cities which are not metropolitan city) will cast their votes for:

- Mayor
- Municipal Council members
- Provincial Assembly Members
- Neighbourhood Representative (*mukhtar*) and Council of Elders

- People who live in villages will cast their votes for:

- Provincial Assembly Members
- Neighbourhood Representative (*mukhtar*) and Community Representatives

- A proportional representation system with a ten percent election threshold¹ is used for provincial assembly elections and municipal council elections.

- First-past-the-post system is used for municipal elections (mayoral elections).

- Local elections are held every 5 years.

¹ 10% election threshold is introduced after 1980 military coup. It is applied to the parliamentary elections along with the provincial assembly and municipal council elections during the local elections. According to this rule, only those political parties which gains at least 10% of the total votes in their respective electoral districts will be able to have representatives in the aforementioned institutions.

The March 31 Local Elections

Run-up to the Local Elections

Turkey held its last local elections on March 30th, 2014. Since then, Turkey has held three general elections, a constitutional referendum and a presidential election. The constitutional referendum, which passed with 51% of the vote on April 16 2017, represents a milestone in the political history of Turkey. With the approval of the amendments, the political system has switched from parliamentary to presidential.

Under the new presidential system, the first general and presidential elections were held on June 24th, 2018. For the first time, parties were allowed to form official alliances in general elections. As such, two alliances emerged: AK Party, MHP and Grand Unity Party (Büyük Birlik Partisi) formed the People's Alliance, while the CHP, İYİ Party, Felicity Party (Saadet Partisi) and Democrat Party (Demokrat Parti) established the Nation's Alliance. The newly emerged alliance system has been adopted by political parties in the upcoming local elections through collaboration in certain strategically important municipalities. The continuation of the alliances indicates

that the nature of the presidential system has affected behaviour of political parties in the local elections.

The AK Party and the MHP - as part of the People's Alliance - are collaborating in 51 out of 81 provinces through the nomination of single candidates. In the largest three cities - Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir - the MHP is supporting the AK Party's candidates while in Adana, Mersin and Manisa, the AK Party is supporting MHP's candidates.

The main opposition CHP and İYİ Party - under the Nation's Alliance - are cooperating in a total of 50 provinces. The İYİ Party is supporting CHP's candidates in Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir. Felicity Party and Democrat Party, previous members of Nation's Alliance, have not been involved in the alliance in the local elections and have nominated their own candidates. Additionally, the HDP (People's Democratic Party) has not nominated candidates in 11 metropolitan cities including Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir, yet its candidates are running in several districts of Istanbul.

30 March 2014 Local Elections Results





TURKEY'S MARCH 31 LOCAL POLLS: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

1

HOW MANY POLITICAL PARTIES WILL PARTICIPATE IN THE ELECTION?

12 political parties will participate in local elections:

- AK Party
- BTP
- BBP
- CHP
- Democrat Party
- DSP
- HDP
- İYİ Party
- MHP
- Felicity Party
- TKP
- Patriotic Party

2

COLORS OF BALLOTS?

Mayors of metropolitan municipalities.



"WHITE"

Members of provincial general council.



"ORANGE"

Mayors of municipalities.



"BLUE"

Municipal council.



"YELLOW"

3

WHEN WILL THE BALLOT COUNTING START?

The counting of the ballots will start immediately after voting ends -- after 4.00 or 5.00 P.M. (13.00 or 14.00 GMT), depending on the city, as above.



4

WHICH VOTES WILL BE COUNTED FIRST?

In metropolitan municipalities, the counting process will start with ballots for metropolitan mayors, district municipality mayors, city councils, and mukhtars.



5

HOW MANY VOTERS?

Almost 58 million voters will go to polls for the local elections.



Source: Anadolu Agency

Election Calendar

- **January 1** Election process officially commences
- **January 2** Political parties who can participate in the local elections, are announced by YSK (Supreme Election Board).
- **January 4-17** Lists of voters announced at neighborhood representative offices.
- **January 27** The order of political parties' names on ballot papers are designated by lots drawn by the YSK.
- **January 31** The registers of electors are confirmed and the polls and ballot box of voters are determined.
- **February 19** Deadline for delivering YSK slats of political parties and independent candidate's applications process.
- **February 22** Temporary lists of mayoral candidates are announced. Reclamation period of candidates starts.
- **February 28** Voter notification papers are distributed.
- **March 3** Candidate lists are declared.
- **March 24** Voter notification papers are finished to distribute voters.
- **March 30** Campaigning period ends.
- **March 31** Election Day

Party Profiles

Ideologies and Leaders of Political Parties

Party	Ideology & Position	Leader
AK Party / Justice and Development Party	Conservative Democracy	Recep Tayyip Erdoğan
CHP/ Republican People's Party	Social Democracy	Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu
MHP/ Nationalist Movement Party	Turkish Nationalism	Devlet Bahçeli
İYİ Party / Good Party	Centre-Right/Nationalism	Meral Akşener
HDP / Peoples' Democratic Party	Leftist Kurdish Nationalism	Pervin Buldan / Sezai Temelli
Felicity Party	Political Islam	Temel Karamollaoğlu
DSP / Democratic Left Party	Social Democracy	Önder Aksakal
Democrat Party	Centre-right	Gültekin Uysal
BBP / Grand Unity Party	Turkish Nationalism and Political Islam	Mustafa Destici
Patriotic Party	Kemalist Nationalism	Doğu Perinçek
HÜDAPAR / Free Cause Party	Kurdish Nationalism and Political Islam	İshak Sağlam
TKP / Communist Party of Turkey	Communism	Kemal Okuyan
BTP / Independent Turkey Party	Nationalism and Kemalism	Haydar Baş



AK Party (Justice and Development Party)

- The AK Party is a conservative-democratic party that was founded by a reformist faction within the Virtue (Fazilet) Party in 2001.
- Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is the founding and the current leader of the party.
- The AK Party is the largest political organization in Turkey with more than ten million members.
- The AK Party has come first in all elections that it has taken part in since 2002.
- The AK Party also spearheaded the constitutional referendums of 2007, 2010 and 2017.
- With the exception of the period between June 7th and November 1st 2015 general elections during which the attempts to form a coalition government failed, the AK Party has been able to form single party governments since the 2002 general elections.
- Accession negotiations between the EU and Turkey began in 2005 during the AK Party's rule.
- In its 17 year-rule, the AK Party has touched upon several chronic issues in Turkish politics, including normalising civilian-military relations, regulations about minorities, and openings with the Kurdish and Alevi communities.
- In previous local elections, the AK Party won 41.67% (2004), 38.39% (2009) and 42.87% (2014) of the votes respectively.



CHP (Republican People's Party)

- The CHP is a social-democrat party that was established in 1923 by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, founder of Turkish Republic.
- Six fundamental pillars represent the Kemalist ideology of the CHP: Republicanism, Populism, Nationalism, Secularism, Statism, and Reformism.
- It is the oldest political party in Turkey.
- The CHP ruled the country under a one-party system until 1946 when the first multi-party elections were held.
- In 1950, the CHP lost its long-lasting status as the single ruling party.
- Since then, the CHP has not succeeded in forming a government without coalition partners.
- Since 2002, the CHP has served as the main opposition party in the parliament.
- Elected in 2010, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu is the current leader of the CHP.
- In the upcoming local elections, the CHP is co-operating with the İYİ Party in some of the municipalities as the continuation of the Nation's Alliance formed for the 2018 national elections.
- The CHP obtained 18.23 % of the votes in 2004, 23.08 % in 2009 and 26.34% in the 2014 local elections.



MHP (Nationalist Movement Party)

• The MHP is a Turkish nationalist party established in 1969 by Alpaslan Türkeş under the name Republican Villagers Nation Party.

• Devlet Bahçeli has been the leader of the party since 1997.

• Under Bahçeli's leadership, the MHP gained 18% of the vote and 129 seats in the 1999 general elections, forming a coalition government

with the DSP (Democratic Left Party) and the Motherland Party (Anavatan Partisi).

• The MHP, along with the AK Party, formed the People's Alliance prior to the June 24th general elections.

• The MHP obtained 10.45% (2004), 15.97% (2009) and 17.82% (2014) in the three previous local elections.



İYİ Party (Good Party)

• Founded on October 25th 2017, The İYİ Party is a relatively new party in Turkish politics.

• The main figures of the İYİ Party are composed of central right, national and conservative wings of Turkish politics.

• The founder and the leader of the party is Meral Akşener, who ran for the presidency in 2018 and received 7.3% of the votes.

• Their first electoral experience was in the 2018 general and presidential elections, where they secured 10% of the vote.

• The İYİ Party formed Nation's Alliance before the 2018 elections along with the CHP, the Felicity Party and Democrat Party.

• In the upcoming local elections, the İYİ Party is cooperating with the main opposition CHP in several municipalities.



Felicity Party

• The Felicity Party is an Islamist party founded in 2001 after the Constitutional Court closed down its predecessor, the Welfare Party.

• The party represents the ideas of the "National View" (Milli Görüş) movement that was founded and led by former Prime Minister of Turkey, Necmettin Erbakan.

• The party has envisaged close cooperation and unity among Muslim countries.

• Temel Karamollaoğlu has been the leader of the party since 2016.

• The Felicity Party formed Nation's Alliance before the 2018 elections along with the CHP, the İYİ Party and Democrat Party.

• The party received 4.02% of the votes in 2004, 5.20% in 2009 and 2.56% of the votes in 2014 local elections respectively.

• In their election manifesto, the party draws attention to concepts of honesty and justice as solutions to the problems people face.



HDP (Peoples' Democratic Party)

- The HDP was founded on October 27th, 2013 and is a successor to a long line of pro-Kurdish parties.
- The politics of the HDP is shaped by its leftist pro-Kurdish ideology.
- The leadership of the HDP is managed through a co-presidential system. The current co-chairs are Sezai Temelli and Pervin Buldan.
- Former co-presidents of the party, Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ are currently in custody, facing accusations of supporting terror related activities.
- Many MPs, mayors, and administrators from the HDP have been put on trial and some of them have been convicted on charges of being associated with the PKK terrorist group.
- In the 2014 local elections, the HDP and Peace and Democracy Party, which ran parallel to HDP in south-eastern cities, received 6.14% of the vote.
- The HDP has not nominated municipality candidates in some of the big cities including Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir in the upcoming local elections



Democrat Party

- The Democrat Party is the current successor of Süleyman Demirel's True Path Party (Doğru Yol Partisi), Turgut Özal's Motherland Party and Adnan Menderes's Democrat Party (Demokrat Parti) which continued its political life from 1946 till 1960.
- The Democrat Party emerged in 2007 after the merger of True Path Party and Motherland Party, under the leadership of Mehmet Ağar, who is a popular figure in Turkish politics.
- Since its establishment, the party has never been represented in the parliament.
- The party is ideologically oriented to the centre-right.
- The Democrat Party was one of the parties that constituted the Nation's Alliance in the lead up to the June 2018 general elections.
- The party summarizes their municipality perspective with openness, efficiency and participation.



DSP (Democratic Left Party)

- The DSP was founded on 14 November 1985.
- The DSP was founded by Bülent Ecevit, former leader of CHP.
- The ideology of the party is rooted in social democracy.
- The DSP became the leading party, receiving 22.19% of the votes in the 1999 general elections and formed a coalition government with MHP and the Motherland Party.
- Because of the ongoing political and economic crisis, the DSP failed to pass the 10% threshold in the early general elections in 2002, and were thereby not represented in the parliament.
- In 2004 Bülent Ecevit resigned from his position as chairperson of the party
- The DSP received 2.11% (2004), 2.85% (2009) and 0.33% (2014) of the vote in the three previous local elections respectively.

Local Election Manifestos

AK Party (Justice and Development Party)

■ City plans will be transparently prepared with the consideration of long-term needs of the cities and plan changes that are open to misuse will not be allowed.

■ All basic infrastructure problems such as drinking water, rain water, sewerage, natural gas, energy and communication lines will be resolved in the coming period across the country.

■ Public transportation projects will be expanded and traffic problems will be resolved in order to reduce the time people spend in traffic. This will be also supported by new parking lots.

■ Within the framework of unique cities, infrastructure projects and development plans in cities will be suitably prepared for each city's own cultural, historical and natural characteristics.

■ Smart city applications and technological devices will be supported to facilitate people's daily lives from access to municipal services to the management of transportation.

■ Cities will become environment and eco-friendly, and will be revitalized with the principle of green and sustainable development. The negative impacts of all elements that harm nature will be eliminated.

■ New "People's Gardens" will be opened allowing people to spend time with their families in a relaxed environment.

■ The AK Party also vows to apply all technological means to the service of the people in cities in order to ease people's lives.

■ The principle of social municipality will be expanded in a way to serve families, children, youth, women, elderly and disabled people along with the victimised and the oppressed.

■ Sport activities will become an integral part of the lives of every people, especially young people.

■ Cities will be administrated together with the people through local councils. Particularly in large projects that concern lives of the people living there, consultation mechanisms will be in play.

■ Cities will create and add value through the cultural and economic productivity of the people. They will be valued with goodness, compassion, culture and artwork, which will be left as a legacy of civilization to the next generations.



Source: President of Republic of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (Cem Öksüz - AA)

CHP (Republican People's Party)

■ The principle of respectful and tolerant cities vows to show respect to people's values, identities and life styles without allowing any sort of exclusion.

■ Cities will be respectful and tolerant in that people's lifestyles, values and identities will be respected and no one will be marginalized.

■ The wealth generated in cities will be distributed to all citizens in a rightful manner.

■ Cities will be administered in an accountable and transparent way. All funds generated through taxes will be monitored by the citizens and all spending will be accounted for.

■ The principle of poverty defeating cities will aim at achieving the elimination of poverty, hunger and unemployment in cities and ensure that no child goes to bed hungry.

■ Cities will be productive, and waste and overconsumption will be reduced. Municipalities will also contribute to the creation of high-quality employment opportunities.

■ Innovations and smart technologies will be adopted with a respect to the nature and cultural heritages of the cities.

■ Cities will become free of transport and infrastructure problems. The amount of time people spend in traffic and the cost of transportation will be reduced with the implementation of innovative and alternative transportation models.

■ Low-rise urbanization will be promoted enabling children to play at green parks within planned and clean cities.

■ Cities will provide social justice by making positive discrimination in favour of the poor, the disabled, the elderly and people with disadvantages. They will be provided social assistance in accordance with human dignity.

■ Cities will promote the development of art and culture. Municipalities will provide easy access to culture and art activities as well as sport programs.

■ The rights of all living beings, not only people, will be protected and respected in environment friendly cities.

■ People from all segments of society will have happy and peaceful living.



Source: Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu (Cem Genco - AA)

IYI Party (Good Party)

■ Residents of the cities will be treated equally without being subject to any sort of discrimination on the basis of race, religion, language, gender, ethnic origin or different thoughts and opinion.

■ In the administration of municipalities, every opinion will be respected. Decisions that concern people's interest will be taken through popular vote and people's participation in the decision-making process will be ensured.

■ The resources of municipalities will be viewed as the wealth of the people. Public spending in municipalities will be shared with the people in a transparent and accountable manner.

■ Art and cultural organisations and artists will be supported. The Aesthetic Councils will ensure that the architectural structures of the cities are in accordance with the national, historical and cultural heritage of the cities.

■ Merit and competence based recruitment will be adopted in the personnel recruitment process. Municipalities will encourage investment, production and employment.

■ All technological innovations will be used in smart cities in order to increase the quality of people's lives. Sustainable development will be provided next to energy and natural resources savings through the analysis of economic, social and environmental data.

■ Internet access will be free of charge in public spaces including municipality buildings, city squares, and public transportation.

■ People in need will be provided with the necessary social services. City identities will be formed and social segregation will be eliminated.

■ Children, youth, women, elders, disabled, and people with disadvantages will be provided special services and their needs will be addressed in municipal decisions.

■ A Smart Transportation System will be established to allow fast, affordable and reliable transportation. Students will benefit from public transportation without charge during the school year.

■ Eco-friendly cities will be established. Any negative impacts on nature will be abolished. Park and forests will be increased allowing all animals and plants to maintain their lives.

HDP (Peoples' Democratic Party)

■ The decision in the cities will be taken by city residents through the implementation of direct democracy in city councils.

■ Everyone will have access to equal service without any discrimination. People's differences will be respected.

■ Projects that will increase the quality of people's lives will be implemented. Children, young, women, disabled, refugees and people with disadvantages will be prioritized in municipality policies and they will be provided policies that make their life better.

■ Municipalities will help strengthen local economies with the participation of local people. Unemployment will be eliminated and new employment opportunities will be created with the involvement of relevant organisations and councils.

■ Municipalities will fight poverty and develop projects to provide social services to people in need. Food and Cloth Banks will be expanded.

■ Urban renewal projects will be shifted by on-site transformation. This will be supported by voluntary and social transformation projects in places at risk.

■ Eco-friendly and affordable public transportation will be extended and private transportation will be limited in order to reduce traffic and air pollution.

■ The environment will be protected with projects that pay due attention to the nature, history, flora and fauna of the cities. Every living being will be protected.

■ Health services will be free of charge.

The Race in the Major Cities

Istanbul

Istanbul is the most important city for the political parties in the local elections. The city is home to more than 15 million people, nearly 20% of Turkey's total population. Moreover, the city is the economic and sociocultural capital of the country. The AK Party and its predecessors have been governing Istanbul since current President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan was elected as mayor in 1994.

The AK Party's candidate for Istanbul Mayor is former Prime Minister and Speaker of Parliament Binali Yıldırım, while the CHP has chosen a local figure, Istanbul's Beylikdüzü district's mayor, Ekrem İmamoğlu.

Binali Yıldırım

Binali Yıldırım is a founding member of the AK Party and a prominent figure in Turkish political life. During his political career Yıldırım served in various positions, including as Minister of Transportation and Communication, and Prime Minister. Yıldırım was the last Prime Minister of the country following Turkey's transition to a presidential system.

Following the 2018 general elections, he was elected as the Speaker of the Parliament. Yıldırım resigned from his post to run for the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality in the upcoming local elections. Mr Yıldırım is supported by the People's Alliance formed by the AK Party and the MHP.



Source: Binali Yıldırım (Elif Öztürk - AA)

Binali Yıldırım's Election Pledges

- New underground metro lines
- New green parks
- Environmentally friendly city
- Smart city

Ekrem İmamoğlu

Ekrem İmamoğlu is the current mayor of Istanbul's Beylikdüzü district. Before his current post, İmamoğlu served as chairman of his family business, board member of Trabzonspor Football Club and executive of the CHP's local organisation in Beylikdüzü.

Following his tenure in Beylikdüzü Mr. İmamoğlu was nominated for the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality by the CHP. Ekrem İmamoğlu's candidacy is also supported by the İYİ Party as part of the Nation's Alliance formed between the CHP and the İYİ Party.



Source: Ekrem İmamoğlu (Elif Öztürk - AA)

Ekrem İmamoğlu's Election Pledges

- Increased social welfare
- Cheaper transportation
- New green parks
- Day care centres in every neighbourhood

Ankara

Turkey's capital Ankara is the second most populated city with 5.5 million inhabitants. Due to its high population and centrality in Turkish political life, Ankara is one of the most regarded cities in local elections. The metropolitan municipality of Ankara has been ruled by the AK Party and its predecessors since the 1994 local elections.

The AK Party's candidate for the elections is the former Minister of Environment and Urban Planning, Mehmet Özhaseki. The CHP candidate, Mansur Yavaş, is a well-known local figure in Ankara who previously served as mayor in Ankara's Beypazarı district.

Mehmet Özhaseki

Mehmet Özhaseki began his political career in his home city of Kayseri in central Turkey. He was elected as mayor of Kayseri for four terms, serving in the post for nearly two decades. In the 2015 general elections he was elected as an MP, serving as Minister of Environment and Urban Planning until 2018.

Mehmet Özhaseki is the AK Party's current Deputy Chairman, responsible for local administrations. Mr. Özhaseki will be running as the AK Party's mayoral candidate for the Ankara Metropolitan Municipality, with the support of the MHP.



Source: Mehmet Özhaseki (Ali Balıkcı - AA)

Mehmet Özhaseki's Election Pledges

- Facilities for children
- New green parks
- Culture investments
- New transportation projects

Mansur Yavaş

Mansur Yavaş was elected as mayor of Ankara's Beypazarı district in the 1999 and 2004 elections. In 2009 he became the MHP candidate for the Ankara Metropolitan Municipality and came in third following the AK Party and CHP candidates. Prior to the 2014 local elections Mr. Yavaş joined the CHP and ran for Ankara's mayor for the second time. Although Mr. Yavaş lost the elections he was able to raise his votes.

Mr Yavaş will be running for the third time to become mayor of Ankara as CHP's candidate. His candidacy is also supported by İYİ Party.



Source: Mansur Yavaş (Ali Balıkcı - AA)

Mansur Yavaş's Election Pledges

- New technology and industrial park
- New underground metro lines
- Renovation of the historical city
- Tourism investments

Izmir

Izmir is Turkey's third largest city with a population of 4.3 million. Located on the coast of the Aegean Sea, one the most industrialised part of the country, Izmir is a port city linking the Aegean region to the world. The city has been an economic and sociocultural hub throughout its history. Izmir is known as the stronghold of the main opposition party CHP

party and the city has been run by CHP mayors since 1999.

In the upcoming local elections the CHP's candidate will be Izmir's Seferhisar district mayor, Tunç Soyer. The AK Party will be running with the former Minister of Economy, Nihat Zeybekçi.

Nihat Zeybekçi

Nihat Zeybekçi began his political career in his hometown Denizli in the Aegean region. In the 2004 and 2009 local elections, he was elected as the Mayor of the Denizli Municipality from the AK Party. In the 2011 general elections Zeybekçi was elected to the parliament. From 2013 to 2018 he served as Minister of Economy in the AK Party government.

Zeybekçi is the AK Party's candidate for the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality. The MHP is also supporting Zeybekçi's candidacy for Izmir.



Source: Nihat Zeybekçi (Metin Aktaş - AA)

Nihat Zeybekçi's Election Pledges

- New transportation projects
- Environment friendly city
- New industry zones
- Investments in Culture

Tunç Soyer

Tunç Soyer is a local politician in Izmir and has served as mayor of the Seferhisar district since 2009. Before his current post, he served as an advisor in the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality and Deputy Secretary General of the Izmir Chamber of Commerce.

The CHP announced Soyer as their candidate in the upcoming local elections for the Izmir Metropolitan Municipality. Soyer's candidacy is also supported by İYİ Party.



Source: Tunç Soyer (Mahmut Serdar Alakuş - AA)

Tunç Soyer's Election Pledges

- New children's villages
- Clean energy investments
- Cheap transportation
- Investments in Culture



Source: (Mahmut Serdar Alakuş - AA)

Some other examples of the Alliance System

Apart from the major centres - Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir - parties have also formed alliances in other cities. As a result of these alliances, relatively minor parties such as the MHP and the İYİ Party have been given an opportunity to secure mayoral seats in cities other than the major centres mentioned above.



Diyarbakır

Diyarbakır is located in southeast Turkey and it is one of the most populous cities of the country with a population of 1.7 million. The HDP and its predecessor parties have won local elections in the city since 1999. However, the HDP's most recent mayor, Gülten Kışanak, was removed from her post by the Interior Ministry after the Diyarbakır Prosecutor opened an investigation against her.

In the upcoming elections, the most powerful parties for the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality are the HDP and the AK Party. The HDP candidate is Selçuk Mızraklı, a local politician who currently serves as a Diyarbakır MP. The AK Party's candidate is the current mayor appointed by the Interior Ministry Cumali Atilla. He is also supported by the MHP.



Adana

Adana is one of the most populous and industrialised cities of Turkey. The city is located in southern Turkey on the Mediterranean coast and is home to 2.2 million people. All of the major political parties have a strong presence in the city. Although the MHP has been the winner of the last two local elections in Adana, the AK Party and the CHP also won the metropolitan municipality in the past.

In Adana the race will be between the MHP and the CHP. The AK Party has announced its support to the MHP candidate and the İYİ Party announced their support for the CHP candidate. The MHP's candidate is the current mayor, Hüseyin Sözlü. The CHP's candidate is another local politician, Adana's Seyhan district mayor Zeydan Karalar.



Balıkesir

Balıkesir is another city where the parties have formed strategic alliances. The city is home to 1.2 million people and located in western Turkey between the Marmara and Aegean Seas. In the 2018 general election, The People's Alliance won 49% and Nation's Alliance won 47% of the vote respectively. These results have made the city an important constituency for both of the alliances in the upcoming local elections.

AK Party candidate Yücel Yılmaz will be running for the People's Alliance. Currently, Yılmaz serves as Balıkesir's Karesi district mayor. The İYİ Party's İsmail Ok will be running for the Nation's Alliance. İsmail Ok is a former MHP member and served as Balıkesir Metropolitan Municipality Mayor from 2009 to 2014.

How does the Electoral Process play out?

- All Turkish citizens over 18 years of age have the right to vote in elections and referenda, with the exception of those holding the military rank of private, corporal, sergeant, or cadet, and those in penal institutions.
- For a strictly up-to-date voter database, the Address Registration System and Identity Sharing System of General Directorate of Civil Registry and Nationality continuously updates the electoral register by storing personal data of Turkish Citizens over the age of 18
- The Supreme Election Board (YSK), which acts as the highest legal authority on electoral matters, is responsible for overseeing and conducting the elections and for all other relevant issues.
- Elections in Turkey are strictly monitored by international and domestic observers.
- All activities related to electoral works (pre-election, on election day, and post-election) during an electoral calendar realised by district election boards throughout Turkey, are undertaken under the auspices of the of SECSIS software, an electronic election management system.
- Political parties are eligible to monitor and audit the election results, which are shared electronically, in accordance with electoral Law 298.
- Tallying and counting operations prepared by ballot box committees are transferred to the electronic environment following the end of the voting process and all information and documents on political parties are simultaneously shared.

The SECSIS system

- Turkey's electronic election infrastructure has been developed with the aim of enabling voters to monitor the information-registered systems, such as identity, addresses and polling stations where they will exercise their voting rights.
- The system has also been used in eliminating duplicate electoral records, announcing election results in very short periods of time, allowing political parties to simultaneously monitor ballot results delivered by district election boards, informing the public about decisions and regulations of YSK, shortening the work processes and increasing the efficiency and productivity with its interactive services – thereby acting as a tool to enhance the transparency of elections.
- Once ballot box results data have been entered into the SECSIS system, temporary results are transmitted simultaneously via web services over a safe and closed line to the YSK and the headquarters of political parties.
- The minutes of the counting process signed by ballot box committees are screened by district election boards and entered into the system, which are also simultaneously shared by headquarters of political parties.
- To maintain transparency, the temporary results presented by district election boards are published on www.ysk.gov.tr so that the public can also view the results based on electoral region. As of date of finalization, the summary of election results are published on the Official Gazette.



Source: (Salih Zeki Fazloğlu - AA)

How are votes cast and regulated?

► Domestic Ballot Box Committees:

- Ballot box committees form the building blocks of the electoral system during elections.
- Composed of 1 president, 6 original members and 6 reserve members, the committees are responsible for supervising the process, documenting all steps and assisting citizens when needed.
- Before the elections, district election boards ask the five most popular political parties in recent elections to assign one original and one reserve member for each of the ballots in a given district.
- After the elections, the committee members enter the results of each ballot box into the SECSIS system to obtain speedy results.
- The results are then made accessible to political parties and pre-selected media as early as possible.

► Transparency:

- Prior to the elections, citizens living in Turkey are recommended to visit www.ysk.gov.tr to check their registration status and where and in which ballot they will vote.
- In the run-up to the local elections, meetings are organised with informatics experts from the political parties in order to evaluate the state of preparations and to discuss technical issues of monitoring and sharing of electoral results.
- On the day of voting, informatics experts from all political parties are invited to the SECSIS Informatics Centre.

► Political Party Portal:

- It is an interface providing all kinds of necessary information related to electoral integrity for participating political parties before, during, and after the elections.
- It provides open access to all political parties eligible to participate in elections.
- During an electoral cycle, the following are simultaneously shared with political parties over SECSIS and are kept under record:
 - Domestic voter lists on public review
 - Voters' changes within the public review period
 - Voter changes within the period of objections
 - Information on ballot result minutes entered into Electoral Informatics System (SECSIS)
 - Scanned signed ballot results minutes

► Election Results:

- Ballot result minutes with original signature by ballot box committee – composed of one president, one Council of Elders member and members of five political parties – are entered in to SECSIS by personnel of the district election boards.
- In line with the 2010 amendment on Law 298 on Basic Provisions of Elections and Voters Registers, results are monitored by members of the YSK and members of political parties and simultaneously shared electronically with political parties participating in elections.
- This process also acts as a verification mechanism whereby political parties have the opportunity to compare the results scanned onto SECSIS and the results obtained manually.

Conclusion

The March 31 elections are the first local elections to be held following the constitutional changes approved in 2017, which had a significant impact on Turkey's political culture – including on the upcoming local elections – most notably in the option of forming political alliances.

Although alliances are not legally formed as in the case of the general elections, they will play a large role in determining the next mayors in many municipalities. By forming alliances with major parties, minor parties will have the chance to be represented in the local government through their members in the city councils. In return they will support the mayor candidates of their allies.

Another dimension of the alliance system is that allied parties have the cities among themselves in order to increase the likelihood of victory. For example, Adana and Antalya are both metropolitan municipalities with similar populations. To strengthen the likelihood of winning both of these metropolitan cities the People's Alliance agreed to present only one candidate in each city. According to the agreement, the MHP's candidate will run for the mayor post in Adana while the AK Party mayor in Antalya will seek re-election. Both parties will support their ally's candidate in each of the respective cities.

Nearly all of the political parties announced local election manifestos. Prominent projects outlined in the manifestos include pledges to solve transportation and infrastructure problems and the deployment of smart technology to improve the way cities function. Traffic and public transportation are two of the top priorities for the public in the three big city Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir. All the candidates are promising to build new underground metro lines to ease traffic and improve the public transportation. Green areas are the second most emphasised issues, especially in metropolitan cities. Furthermore, all of the major parties have included plans to develop large green spaces and parks in city centres. A new phenomenon that was not strongly addressed in prior local elections is the use of technology to increase the quality of people's lives. Candidates are promising to employ these smart technology solutions in areas such as transportation, energy and infrastructure.

It is expected that provisional results will be available towards midnight on the night of March 31. New mayors and city council members will start their duties right after the YSK announces the final results in early April.



Source: (İsa Terli - AA)

