

*New Zealand and Turkey: Totally different corruption levels*

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According to World Bank corruption is defined as the ‘abuse of public office for private gain’. Corruption has been seen as a primary impediment to growth with major consequences in the developing world.

Corruption has a devastating impact on the poor population because it increases costs reducing the access to services such as education, health, and justice. Studies show that unofficial payments for services can have a particularly pernicious impact on poor people. A World Bank brief notes that every stolen or misdirected dollar, peso, yuan, rupee, or ruble “*robs the poor of an equal opportunity in life and prevents governments from investing in their human capital.*”

Corruption erodes trust in government and fuels violent extremism, and societal conflicts. The Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) which measures corruption levels in global scale is an index published annually by Berlin-based Transparency International since 1995. The 2020 CPI published in January of 2021, currently ranks 180 countries on a scale from 100 (very clean) to 0 (highly corrupt) based on the situation between May 2019 and May 2020. In the list, New Zealand, Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Singapore and Switzerland are stated as the top 6 least corrupt countries in the world. In 2020 Corruption Perception Index Turkey holds 40 points out of 100 and ranks the 86th country out of 180 countries. New Zealand holds 88 points and ranks the 1st country out of 180 countries.

This paper is not an attempt to make a deep comparative analysis of New Zealand Turkey in terms of corruption levels. This paper is an attempt to shift attention on the hugely different approaches the two countries adopt in terms of the fight against corruption within the framework of legal regulations and to what degree they are effective in combating corruption.

The Risk and Compliance Portal published a report about New Zealand in 2020. This Report notes that the country has a comprehensive legal framework to combat corruption. There are strict penalties for corrupt practices (ICS 2015). The Crimes Act (CA) deals with the issues in the public sector and the Secret Commissions Act (SCA) in the private sector (NZGOV, 2016). Under the CA, most bribery offenses are punishable with imprisonment not exceeding seven years, except for convictions for judicial corruption, and corruption by Ministers of the Crown (NRF, 2014). The New Zealand Public Service Code of Conduct states public servants may not abuse their functions or accept any gifts, or benefits which may compromise their integrity.

With regard to the Report on Turkey made by the Risk and Compliance Portal in 2020 a totally different picture is evident. In fact, with regard to legal mechanisms the Turkish case has a good image. The Turkish Criminal Code criminalizes various forms of corrupt activity, including active and passive bribery, also the Law on Asset Disclosure, Struggle against Bribery and Corruption provides regulations as well. In the report it is noted that the enforcement of legislation varies and the government has been criticized for its lack of willingness to tackle corruption. The Report made by the Risk and Compliance Portal in 2020 also notes that Turkey has ratified the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), the OECD Anti-Bribery Convention, the Council of Europe Criminal Law Convention on Corruption and the Council of Europe Civil Law Convention on Corruption. Another issue that is emphasized in the report is about the OECD. The OECD Working Group on corruption continues to express concerns about Turkey's low levels of enforcement of foreign bribery legislation (OECD 2017). However when Turkey's fight in practice against corruption is analyzed, it is seen that these legal regulations are not adopted in an efficient way and a high level of corruption exists in the country.

On the official web page of Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey it is noted that “*Corruption is a threat for good governance, erodes confidence in and respect for democratic institutions and emerges as an obstacle to the economic development.*” saying that Turkey is active in various international organizations in the fight against corruption.

Unfortunately, Turkey's fight against corruption is not very effective. In the 2019 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Turkey, the U.S. Department of State explains this with the following words:

*“While the law provides criminal penalties for conviction of official corruption, the government did not implement the law effectively, and some officials engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. Parliament charges the Court of Accounts, the country's supreme audit institution, with accountability related to revenues and expenditures of government departments. In 2018 it did not publish its annual report, however, and as of December had not begun*

*its 2019 audit. Outside this audit system, there was no established pattern of or mechanism for investigating, indicting, and convicting individuals accused of corruption, and there were concerns regarding the impartiality of the judiciary in the handling of corruption cases.”*

The issue of corruption has a multidimensional issue and sometimes in addition to having a national dimension it also has an international dimension as well. Corruption most of the time denotes to lack of transparency. In this regard, founder of modern Turkey Atatürk’s saying should come to our minds once again. *“People should always walk towards high, clean and holy goals. This is the way of action that satisfies the conscience and brain. Those who walk in this way, no matter how much they make sacrifices, will rise and this way of action will definitely be clear. Because their foreheads are open. Societies that are managed by open minds, open hearts and consciences can only be the operators of movements in this sense. Those who keep their ideas, feelings and initiatives secret may be those who act outside of reason and logic, which requires embarrassment and boredom. The end of those who engage in such things will eventually be in pain.”*