

Turkish government destroys more than 300,000 books

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Regime says it is cracking down on anything linked to Fethullah Gülen, the Muslim cleric it blames for 2016's attempted coup

More than 300,000 books have been removed from Turkish schools and libraries and destroyed since the attempted coup of 2016, according to Turkey's ministry of education.

Turkey's education minister Ziya Selçuk announced last week that 301,878 books had been destroyed as the government cracks down on anything linked to Fethullah Gülen, the US-based Muslim cleric who is accused by [Turkey](#) of instigating 2016's failed military coup. Gülen has denied involvement.

The figure was first reported by the [popular newspaper Hürriyet](#), with images of books being seized and burned [published by online news outlet Kronos27](#).

[According to the website Turkey Purge](#), which describes itself as "a small group of young journalists who are trying to be the voice for Turkish people who suffer under an oppressive regime", in 2016 a maths book was banned for featuring Gülen's initials in a question reading "from point F to point G". In December 2016, [Turkish newspaper BirGün reported](#) that 1.8m textbooks had been destroyed and reprinted for containing the "objectionable" word Pennsylvania, which is where [Gülen lives in a guarded compound](#). Streets named Gülen in Ankara have also been renamed, [according to reports](#).

Free speech organisations said they were alarmed at the comments from Turkey's minister of education. "In just three years, the publishing landscape in Turkey has been all but decimated, with 29 publishing houses shut down by emergency decree for 'spreading terrorist propaganda'," said PEN International and English [PEN](#) in a joint statement.

[A 2018 report from English PEN](#) found that, following [the state of emergency decreed after the attempted coup](#), 200 media outlets and publishing organisations had been shut down, 80 writers subjected to investigations and prosecutions and 5,822 academics dismissed from 118 public universities. The report pointed to a "crisis of freedom of expression" in Turkey.

"The government has dramatically increased its influence on the media and publishing landscape, thereby silencing critical voices," said PEN. "[We call on the Turkish authorities](#) to permit the reopening and independent operation of publishing houses, and to urgently end their far-reaching crackdown on freedom of expression, which continues unabated."

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The Guardian

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/aug/06/turkish-government-destroys-more-than-300000-books>