Strengthening Turkey’s Checks and Balances System through Constitutional Reform

The project “Strengthening Turkey’s Checks and Balances System through Constitutional Reform” was organized in collaboration with the National Democratic Institute (headquartered in Washington, D.C.). The process of compiling the report involved three different parts. In the fall 2011, IPC held two day long conferences in order to discuss the key issues raised regarding checks and balances within the context of the current constitutional reform. The first meeting included current members of the four parties represented in parliament and members from Turkish civil society. The second meeting involved experienced MPs and academics that have specialized in one of the three specific areas. Each conference considered the three areas of focus, which led to discussions, agreements on reform measures, and highlighted specific areas where there was still disagreement on practical reforms. The second process was interviewing people critical in policy change within Turkey. This included members of civil society not available at the conferences as well as members of smaller political parties not represented in the Parliament. The third process was an academic analysis of best practices of checks and balances in other countries. It also considered previously conducted research that compared different parliaments and their effective systems of checks and balances. The report emphasized that although there are good examples from other countries, it is important to take them into the context of the Turkish government, and consider the gradual integration of new policies.

Consensus points were highlighted with clear reform recommendations in the report. The proposals of the individual parties as well as members of civil society were given an equal voice and represented comprehensively throughout the report. Rather than analyze and design a policy, the emphasis was placed on putting all of the discussion, consensus, and disagreement on constitutional reform in one place. The day-long conferences also gave the government and civil society a platform to discuss such reforms. Keyman, Sancar, Sarıbay, and Kalaycıoğlu then presented the report to President Abdullah Gül, Cemil Çiçek, the Speaker of the Turkish Parliament and the MPs involved in drafting the new constitution in the last week of February 2012.