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TURKEY

ASYLUM

Administrative sanctions and deportations of LGBTI+ refugees increased this year. LGBTI+ refugees applying for international protection were sent by the Provincial Migration Administration to cities where LGBTI+ phobia is more prevalent. In Isparta, an Iranian trans woman organised a one-person protest to draw attention to these struggles - she was sent to a removal centre and then deported.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Political and religious leaders, including President Erdogan (see under *Family*), and pro-government media outlets continued speaking about LGBTI people with hate. Minister of Internal Affairs Süleyman Soylu made several hateful statements this year, saying LGBTI people were “propaganda of a terrorist organisation”, and a Western import (see here, here, and here).

LGBTI+ people were included on the list of targets of an alleged ISIS leader in February. The Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office filed a case against him.

In May, civil society filed a criminal complaint against anonymous leaflets calling for the murder of LGBTI+ people, which activists claim were spread by jihadist gangs. The leaflets quote early Islamist scholars and detail that LGBTI+ people should be murdered by stoning or burning.

In September, the anti-LGBTI Great Family March was held in Istanbul with the slogan “Save your family and your generation, say no to perversion”. The march was publicised on national TV with a video calling LGBTQ+ people a virus, sparking widespread hate speech, and was attended by thousands. Some participants called for the killing and violence against LGBTI people, criminalisation, and the banning of LGBTI organisations and events. Other marches followed, including in Ankara, Izmir, Urfa, and Konya and continued in November in Trabzon, Gaziantep, Batman, Mardin, Van, Kayseri, Diyarbakır, and Bitlis. Many public figures condemned the hateful marches. In November, Kaos GL filed a lawsuit against the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) for broadcasting the hate rally as a public spot.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Kaos GL’s annual monitoring report found that 2021 was one of the most violent years against the community to date, with eight recorded murders but suspects the actual number of murders is higher. The report also highlights the issue of widespread police violence, torture and ill-treatment, and unlawful detention, particularly at demonstrations. It was also reported that 30 per cent of all violations against LGBTI+s were about freedom of assembly and expression.

A number of court cases, focusing on anti-LGBTI attacks or murder, continued to be pending or stalled this year - some for over ten years. The trial of Ahmet Yıldız, who was killed by his father in 2008 for being gay, continued but then was postponed to 2023.

In July, the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women called on Turkey to tackle gender-based violence against LGBTI women.

BODILY INTEGRITY

In some hospitals in big cities, doctors have gradually reduced or stopped performing non-consensual surgical interventions, but civil society reports that in provincial hospitals, surgeries continue at the same pace.

Over the past two years, the number of anti-LGBTI+ psychiatric centres offering so-called ‘conversion therapies’ has increased.

In November, KAOS GL flagged two books, available online, which promote so-called ‘conversion therapy’ and incite discrimination and violence.

EDUCATION

The harassment of those taking part in the Boğaziçi Resistance continued this year, with many being prosecuted, harassed on and off campus, or their scholarships revoked.

A report by ÜniKuir and SPoD found that LGBTI+ people have no access to mechanisms to complain about harassment and violence in universities.

EMPLOYMENT

Kaos GL's research on the situation of LGBTI+ people working in the public and private sectors found that unemployment is widespread among LGBTI+ people and there is increased fear of discrimination and being fired.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Six opposition parties signed and Memorandum of Understanding on the Reinforced Parliamentary System in February, which does not include any references to the rights of LGBTI people.

FAMILY

In October, President Erdogan again spoke about plans for a new "civil" and "democratic" constitution, which would strengthen the institution of 'family' by introducing protections from "perverse trends". On 9 December, the draft bill of constitutional amendments was submitted to parliament with the signatures of 336 MPs. It needs 64 more signatures to pass directly. Failing that, it needs 24 more signatures to proceed to a referendum. The constitutional changes include restricting marriage to between men and women: "Marriage shall consist only of the union of a man and a woman" when the article it amends originally only used the gender-neutral term "spouses".

FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN, OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

In June, civil society held a protest against torture and ill-treatment by the police that targets trans women in Izmir. Other instances of police abuse were reported in October in Istanbul.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Turkey continued to severely violate the right to freedom of assembly in the country this year, with systemic bans, violent attacks on demonstrations, mass detention, and violence. A total of 11 Pride events were unlawfully banned, including at Boğaziçi University, METU, in Eskişehir, Ankara, and Istanbul. In all these instances participants defied the ban and held a gathering, but were met with police brutality, including the use of teargas and rubber bullets, and hundreds of people were detained. At Istanbul Pride,

the police attacked participants and detained 373 people, 34 of whom were minors - marking the most violent crackdown to date. The police also detained journalists and harassed and detained people at random in the city if they had rainbow symbols with them. On numerous occasions, the police prevented lawyers from speaking to the detainees. At one police station, police officers assaulted a female lawyer. In total, 530 people were detained during Pride season, over the span of 37 days.

As a new trend, several of the Pride marches were targeted by extremist religious and nationalist groups and were left without adequate police protection.

LGBTI+ people joined Newroz celebrations in Diyarbakır, Eskişehir, İstanbul and İzmir with rainbow and trans flags, many of which were confiscated and several people were assaulted.

Several Women's Day events were held on 8 March in Ankara, İstanbul, İzmir, Bursa, Diyarbakır, Mersin, Eskişehir, Antalya, Gaziantep, Aydın, and Balıkesir. In some cities, police tried to prevent the march. 78 people including LGBTI+ activists were detained in Antalya and İstanbul.

Over 200 people were arrested in Istanbul on 25 November at the demonstration to mark the Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Many were detained and assaulted by the police.

In December, nationalist groups threatened and appeared at an event of the Nilüfer City Council Youth Assembly. The Ministry of Interior launched an investigation against the municipality.

The court case against eight activists who participated in the 2021 Istanbul Pride continued this year and ended with an acquittal in February.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

Court proceedings were initiated against Tarlaşa Community Centre, a women's and children's rights organisation, for planning an event on LGBTI+ topics. The case is ongoing.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

President Erdogan announced new measures to curb Turkey's media content, saying reprisals are needed to protect Turkish culture and children. Civil society warned this might further restrict freedom of expression on LGBTIQ issues.

The Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) fined Netflix over an animated series Jurassic World Camp Cretaceous because of its LGBT+ characters. Disney's new animated movie 'Strange World' was banned in Turkey.

HEALTH

Over the past two years, the costs of hormones increased, making access difficult for most trans people.

A person living with HIV turned to the Ombudsman after a doctor disclosed their HIV status without their consent. The Ombudsman found in favour of the hospital and the doctor.

HOUSING

LGBTI+ people continued to be unlawfully evicted from their homes. The economic crisis has increased poverty in Turkey and among LGBTI+ people and LGBTI+ refugees. The 17 May Association published 'From Discrimination to Poverty: LGBTI+ People in Turkey'. The Association also found that ageing and elderly LGBTI+ people experience multiple discrimination in finding and renting accommodation.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Human rights defenders continued to be targets of police violence (see under *Freedom of Assembly*) and hate campaigns by the media and lawsuits for 'immoral activity'. Some activists received death threats. The 17 May Association's research highlighted that human rights defenders working on LGBTI+ rights are under intense stress and exhausted, mostly due to the current political climate. The Association provided wellbeing support to 60 LGBTI+ rights defenders in 2022.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

Singer Mabel Matiz was targeted by hate speech after releasing a song about same-gender love. RTÜK banned the video. Singer Gülşen is under investigation for mocking religious schools. She has frequently been targeted by pro-government media for her support of LGBTI+ people and for using the rainbow flag at concerts.

For the first time, an LGBTI organisation, SPoD, was elected to the İstanbul City Council Steering Committee, in January.

Lawyer and long-time advocate for LGBTIQ+ rights Öykü Didem Aydın, was listed as a nominee to sit on the Constitutional Court.

The chairperson of the Workers' Party (TİP) said in January that they would nominate a gay MP in the future.

Representatives from Kaos GL and the 17 May Association were elected to the Çankaya City Council Executive Board.

LGBTI+ activist Remzi Altunpolat was elected to the party council of the Green Left Party.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

The Human Rights and Equality Institution of Turkey (TİHEK) issued an opinion that solitary confinement of LGBTI+ prisoners is not a rights violation.

TURKEY WEB PAGE

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