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TURKEY

ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

Following the February 6 earthquakes, LGBTI+ people in the disaster area [experienced increased levels of discrimination](#) and barriers to accessing humanitarian aid, including food and sanitation as well as financial, psychological, and housing support. See [here](#) and [here](#).

A report on ‘The Situation of LGBTI+ People After the Earthquake’ [found](#) widespread discrimination and need for support even months after the disaster.

ASYLUM

LGBTQ+ Syrian refugees [faced](#) exclusion, discrimination and harassment in the aftermath of the February [earthquake](#), which killed thousands and left millions displaced.

In June, the Iranian LGBTI+ refugee and activist Elyas Torabibaeskendari was detained at the Istanbul Pride march and threatened with deportation. Family members and human rights organisations [held a press conference](#) urging his release, citing violations of international agreements. He was [released](#) a month later.

A [report](#) about a Portuguese man targeted as gay, arrested on the day of Istanbul Pride and detained for 20 days revealed the condition of repatriation centres in Turkey.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Throughout the year, countless [politicians](#) made [hateful](#) statements. Religious leaders also continued to spread anti-LGBTI hate. President Erdogan was again one of the most vocal speakers against LGBTI people (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#)), and particularly during the campaign leading up to the elections in May. Banning LGBTI+ organisations and the [protection](#) of traditional family values were key [elements](#) of campaigning this year. Two parties, the [New Welfare Party](#) and [HÜDA-PAR](#) entered into parliament for the first time, both representing extremist, anti-LGBTI and anti-gender views. Civil society reports that even the opposition alliance has been [hesitant](#) to advocate for LGBTI+ rights. Ahead of the elections, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights [called](#) on Turkey to stop its unprecedented hateful rhetoric against LGBTI people.

In the commission discussing the proposed amendment to Article 41 of the Constitution from “The protection of family and children’s rights” to “The protection of family, conjugal union and children’s rights”, officials and politicians made hateful, [discriminatory](#) speeches. Pro-government media outlets continued speaking about

LGBTI+ people with hate. Especially after the general elections, the term “LGBT terror” was frequently used in the media ([here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#)) close to the government. [Yeni Akit Newspaper](#), known for its anti-LGBTI+ views, frequently targeted bar associations working on LGBTI+ rights. There were [news articles](#) that defined being LGBTI+ as sick, including opinions from ‘experts’.

In its country report on Turkey, the European Commission [highlighted](#) anti-LGBTIQ hate speech as a serious issue and noted its increase since the February [earthquake](#).

Kaos GL’s survey [found](#) that 89% of LGBTI respondents had been targeted by digital violence.

Hateful backlash and the spread of harmful [misinformation](#) was [launched](#) after a research article on gender incongruence in adolescents was published. Civil society [stood](#) in support of the researchers.

In September, the anti-LGBTI+ [Great Family March](#) was held in Istanbul with the slogan “LGBT Propaganda should be banned for our children, our family, and humanity”. RTÜK approved the march’s ad [called](#) ‘Say No to LGBT Propaganda’, which was then [publicised](#) on national TV as a ‘public service announcement’ (PSA). Kaos GL filed a complaint against the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) for the alleged PSA, but the Prosecutor [dropped](#) the charges saying the spots were to “protect the institution of family”. Ten activists, who protested against the so-called ‘PSA’ were [detained](#) in Izmir.

SPoD [reported](#) that applications to its LGBTI+ Helpline on SOGI-based discrimination and violence increased by 42% in the first month following the first anti-LGBT+ demonstration and by 240% compared to the same period of the previous year.

Kaos GL and other LGBTI+ associations organised a [broadcast on YouTube](#) on the day of Great Family March, with the participation of many journalists, academics, celebrities, activists, and politicians.

An academic with records of discriminatory discourse against LGBTI+ people was [appointed](#) to the High Board of Religious Affairs of the Presidency of Religious Affairs.

In September, Turkish State Railways (TCDD) filed a criminal complaint against a pro-LGBTI+ advertisement from Kaos GL, which was shot in Istanbul’s commuter rail Marmaray. Kaos GL withdrew the video due to the wide targeting and death threats.

SPoD and its LGBTI+ Rights Protocol, which is signed by the candidates during the election period, was [targeted](#) by one of the Big Family Alliance members.

In September, the so-called Grand Family Platform held a [demonstration](#) in Istanbul on the anniversary of their first anti-LGBTI+ protest and petitioned the parliament to shut down LGBTI+ associations.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Kaos GL's annual monitoring report [found](#) that 2022 again was characterised by widespread police violence, torture and ill-treatment, and unlawful detention, particularly at demonstrations. At least 571 LGBTI+ activists were detained in one year. At the same time, the police failed to protect LGBTI+ people from hate crimes and most attacks remained without sanctions. 2022 was also a year where the government made relentless efforts to eliminate LGBTI+ people and topics from the public sphere, through bans and censorship.

A trans woman was [murdered](#) in her home in Ankara in August. A trans woman was [found](#) dead in Kocaeli in November.

Countless hate crimes were documented throughout the year. On 5 January 2023, in the early hours of the morning in the Alsancak district of Izmir, trans woman [Ecem Seçkin](#) was murdered with a hate motive.

In İzmir Alsancak, trans woman [Melis Yağmur Hanzade](#) was attacked by a group wandering the streets, calling for the observance of the Islamic faith. There is no information that the perpetrators were caught.

A group attacked a trans woman waiting at a bus stop with a fire extinguisher. Those arrested said they did it 'as a joke'. ([here](#))

Reactionary and anti-LGBTI+ groups tried to attack a breakfast organised by the LGBTI+ Rights Commission of the Izmir Bar Association as part of Pride Week activities. The group raised the takbir and used insulting and threatening words against the lawyers. The police did not intervene against the group (see [here](#), [here](#)).

In June, 154 journalists and press workers [published](#) a joint statement 'We do not want to write any more news about violence and prohibition against LGBTI+ people!'

A number of court cases, focusing on anti-LGBTI+ attacks or murder, continued to be pending or deliberately stalled this

year (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#)) - some for over [15 years](#).

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.

Inter Solidarity, the country's only intersex organisation, continued to develop relationships with medical professionals and advocate within the medical community on the protection of bodily integrity. The organisation held two [workshops](#) with medical students and doctors in 2023.

Inter Solidarity was included in the Ankara Medical Chamber LGBTI+ working group.

In December 2022, Nationalist Movement Party Vice President Feti Yıldız announced that the party would [submit](#) a bill to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey that prohibits gender transition except for medical necessity." Throughout 2023, intersex and trans activists mobilised against the bill and the Nationalist Movement Party claimed it could not submit the bill to the parliament.

EDUCATION

In September, the Ministry of Education [announced](#) introducing a new optional course on 'The Family in Turkish Society' to combat "LGBT values".

EMPLOYMENT

The Supreme Court [ruled](#) in July that the firing of trans doctor Larin Kayataş for "undermining morals" in 2021 was [unlawful](#) and that she needs to be re-hired.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The government dropped a number of planned constitutional amendments after the [earthquake](#) in February. These planned to introduce a constitutional ban on marriage equality and could have paved the way to ban LGBTI+ associations. Civil society remains concerned that the initiatives will be tabled again.

Kaos GL and the May 17 Association [released](#) the "LGBTI+'s Access to Justice" report, finding inadequate mechanisms, difficulty finding LGBTI+-friendly lawyers, and high costs.

FAMILY

In his victory speech in May, President Erdogan promised to protect the institution of the ‘family’, which many fear means a continued and increased crackdown on LGBTI+ rights and organisations. In October for instance, Erdogan called LGBTI+ people one of the greatest threat to ‘family’.

FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN, OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

Civil society reports that the use of torture and ill-treatment by the police was more widespread this year than ever before, albeit the number of detentions decreased.

The police, for instance, assaulted and detained a Portuguese tourist on the day of Istanbul Pride and held him in deplorable detention conditions for 20 days. Police assaulted a trans woman in Ankara and used excessive force at events all year long.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Türkiye 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. Throughout the months of June, activists organised several Pride events and marches in Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Eskişehir, among others, some of which were successfully held. The police arrested 15 students for peacefully demonstrating at METU. A week later, the police blocked Istanbul Trans Pride March, used violence against the participants, and detained ten participants. The police did not grant a permit for the Istanbul Pride march on 25 June, installed roadblocks on the route, and suspended metro service near Taksim square. The organisers held an unannounced protest about 1 km from Taksim. The police detained over 100 participants in Istanbul and at least 50 in Izmir, where Pride was held on the same day.

Overall, the police backlash led to the detention of 241 people during Pride month, including four children, seven lawyers, five foreigners, journalists, and activists.

Several of the Pride marches were targeted not only by extremist religious and nationalist groups, but also by political parties. The Patriotic Party and its youth branch, Turkish Youth Union (TGB), targeted an LGBTI+ Pride Month event scheduled to take place at the Ankara Bar Association. A group of ten people gathered before a gender equality panel and insulted those attending. The police did not intervene, and the event went ahead despite the provocation.

Throughout the year, LGBTI+ picnics, concerts and film screenings were also banned and obstructed by police (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#)).

LGBTI+ people joined Newroz celebrations in Diyarbakır with rainbow flags, but were attacked.

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 ban and prevent the marches. 28 people including LGBTI+ activists were detained in Istanbul and released on the same night. and the police used excessive force against the participants.

The court case against 12 activists who participated in Pride at Boğaziçi University in 2021 continued this year and ended with an acquittal in January. The case against Ankara Pride participants also continued. Court proceedings against Tarlaş Community Centre, a women’s and children’s rights organisation that planned an LGBTI+ event, continued this year.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

The political rhetoric during this year’s elections targeted LGBTI+ associations and included calls for their closure. The Platform for Unity in Idea and Struggle submitted a petition to the Turkish Grand National Assembly with 150,000 signatures, calling for the closure of LGBTI+ organisations.

Hacettepe University closed the LGBTI+ student club, which had official status.

83 lawyers established an LGBTI+ Rights Commission in the Adana Bar Association.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

President Erdogan announced new measures to curb Turkey’s media content, saying reprisals are needed to protect Turkish culture and children.

The Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) fined several streaming platforms this year because of LGBT+ characters (see [here](#) and [here](#)).

Journalist Semra Çelebi was acquitted for posting a rainbow flag on her social media during the 2020 Pride march.

In Dugan v. Turkey, the ECtHR found a violation of Art 5.1, right

to liberty, when the police took a trans woman sex worker to a police station to identify her and eventually fined her for disruption of traffic, as this is usually done on the spot.

HEALTH

In August 2023, some doctors and mental [health professionals from Istanbul University](#) were targeted by Islamist media for providing gender-affirming medical care to underage trans people, claiming that this constituted child abuse. State authorities did not challenge this targeting. In response, all medical faculties offering gender affirming medical care suspended or restricted their services for a period of time.

Following the February 6 earthquakes, LGBTI+ people in the disaster area [experienced](#) problems in access to healthcare services, especially hormone replacement and antiretroviral therapies (see [here](#)).

HOUSING

LGBTI+ people continued to be unlawfully evicted from their homes. The economic crisis has increased poverty in Turkey and adversely among LGBTI+ people and LGBTI+ refugees.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

In May, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights [called on Turkey](#) to cease pressure on human rights defenders, NGOs, journalists and lawyers.

Some activists [received](#) death threats. The 17 May Association provided well-being support to 65 LGBTI+ rights defenders.

Following the [earthquake](#) in February, most LGBTI+ groups suspended their usual work and focused on relief work and addressing discrimination in the provision of aid and support, which was common. A report on 'The Situation of LGBTI+ People After the Earthquake' [found](#) widespread discrimination and need for support, even months after the disaster.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

LGBTI+ activists including trans activist Esmeray Özadikti [ran](#) as a candidate for the Turkish Workers' Party (TİP).

A total of 58 candidates from CHP, TİP, and the Green Left Party signed the LGBTI+ Rights Charter prepared by SPoD, which was open for signatures by parliamentary candidates from all political parties. Eleven candidates who signed the LGBTI+ Rights Charter were elected: one MP from CHP, three from TİP, and seven from the Green Left Party.

Pop singer Gülşen [was given a suspended sentence](#) of ten months in prison for mocking religious schools and served five days in prison and 15 under house arrest. She has frequently been targeted by pro-government media for her support of LGBTI+ people and for using the rainbow flag at concerts.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

In its country report on Turkey, the European Commission [highlighted](#) violence against LGBTI+ incarcerated people. Despite petitions, the authorities have [failed](#) to relocate a trans woman prisoner to a women's prison.

PUBLIC OPINION

A study found that 30% of society [supports](#) legal recognition for different sexual orientations.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

A Sexual and Reproductive Health Consultancy Centre [opened](#) in Kadıköy.



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