

# Political Clarity in Uncertain Times: Facing Forward as a Movement

[Blog, ILGA-Europe Annual Conference](#)

At the opening panel of the ILGA-Europe Conference, activists and leaders from across Europe explored what it means to stay united, intersectional and hopeful in the face of growing authoritarianism.

The opening panel of the ILGA-Europe Conference offered a compelling and thought-provoking discussion. Moderated by Micah Grzywnowicz from IPPF-EN and ILGA-Europe Advisory Board member, the session featured Jolyon Maugham from the Good Law Project, UK; Eve Geddie from Amnesty EU, Belgium; Srishagon Abraham from the Coloured Collective, the Netherlands; and Enes Hocao?ullar? from UniKuir, Turkey. Under the title 'Political Clarity in Uncertain Times', the conversation explored how the movement can continue to face forward in today's volatile world.

## What are we fighting for?

Micah began by asking: When we think about our movements, when we think about ourselves as a collective, what can we not lose sight of? What are we fighting for?

Srishagon responded first: We cannot face forward talking about alliance without first critically reflecting on whether we are intersectional and inclusive. How can we start to include? We cannot fight for a future that is anti-fascist if we don't have that within our own organisations. We've taken the differences in our experiences within our movement for granted. We need to ask ourselves, in the present, what are we currently missing?"

Jolyon followed, emphasising the need for coalition-building: "I'm cis, straight, white and privileged in all sorts of ways. When I attended a Black Trans Lives Matter march, I witnessed firsthand the intersection between trans and Black people. Those two communities share an understanding of solidarity in tackling the powers that oppress them. Unlocking that solidarity is key to building broader constituencies that can resist authoritarianism. That story of solidarity is at the heart of how the LGBTIQ+ community has succeeded. We must give ourselves the time and permission to try — and to fail."

Eve then spoke about the global context: "We're building a global response to authoritarianism. The local is global. The authoritarian leaders we see now began their anti-rights campaigns locally — targeting LGBTI people, Black people, abortion rights — and now they are leading a global anti-rights agenda. These were clear warning signs of the rise of authoritarianism.

"It's crucial to remember that this ideology is a reaction to our success — to all the wins we've achieved as civil society. Those who held power are trying to take it back. We must remember that we stand on the shoulders of giants, and today we enter that struggle with more voices, more power, and stronger connections than ever. We support the causes and voices of the many, not the few."

Enes spoke next, reflecting on Turkey's place as third from the bottom on ILGA-Europe's Rainbow Map: "It's shocking how trendy it has become to be cruel to us — it's a playbook. But we fail to use each other's playbooks.

We come together but often don't learn from each other's ways of coping with struggle. How can we become better at sharing what works?"

## The Trade-offs

Micah then asked: Where do you see the biggest tensions or trade-offs worth addressing now, and how can we overcome them?

Jolyon responded: "Most of the cases at the Good Law Project are trans-related, but we're not a single-issue organisation. We're challenging the growth of authoritarianism itself. We're working out how to turn solidarity into action. For us, it's a tech solution — building microsites, funding allies, and encouraging them to grow audiences. This is about building bigger political coalitions. Since 2020, we've grown to half a million subscribers and two million social media followers."

Shrishagon paid tribute to the late activist Assata Shakur, who passed away in September: "Shakur once said, 'Nobody in history has ever gotten freedom by appealing to the moral sense of those who are oppressing them.' We rely too much on financial support that's handed to us. But at the same time organisations are banned and labelled terrorists; minorities are demonised, and disabled people are left behind. We need to reimagine how we fuel our movements on our own terms — moving beyond public funding and ensuring those with power take responsibility for those still being trampled upon."

Enes asked a sobering question: "Who guards the guards? Who defends human rights defenders? In prison, I was vilified by the media, yet by speaking openly about who I am, I changed minds — even among my cellmates. Despite the government's belief that we were polar opposites, I realised most people are more similar than different. It was both a curse and a blessing. We must learn to speak to those we believe hate us — to find common ground."

Eve reflected on coalition-building at Amnesty International: "Coalitions bring power and influence, but also tensions around recognition and resources. Organisations with privilege must know when to use their power and when to step back. Listening and learning is key. It takes time to build trust.

"Sometimes, we face compromises that aren't worth making. For example, a coalition statement on the crackdown on Palestinians removed all mention of genocide and violations of international law — so we withdrew. Explaining why opened up important dialogue. When we've stepped away from exclusive coalitions, we've joined new ones — like the European Coalition on Sex Workers' Rights and Inclusion. Whatever the issue, we must centre the human rights situation at its heart."

## Opportunities for Collective Work

For the final question — Where do you see opportunities for collective work? — the panellists turned to the future.

Eve outlined three approaches: hope, power, and action.

"Hope lies in connection — with those working now, those who came before, and in moments like this where we can share strategies.

On power she said, "Authoritarians have infinite financial resources, but we have people power. Many who supported these leaders will grow disillusioned, and we must find ways to bring them back.

"Action means both resisting and reforming. For some of us, that's playing the long game — articulating our radical vision and supporting those traditionally excluded from politics to get involved."

Srishagon highlighted growing inclusivity in mobilisation: “We’re seeing waves of mass mobilisation that cut across identities, united against fascism. Our existence is resistance. We must share resources, build broader coalitions, and offer care as well as fight. As Assata Shakur said, ‘We need to be weapons of mass construction, weapons of mass love. Revolution is evolution.’”

Jolyon returned to the theme of technology: “It’s hard to actualise solidarity across communities, but technology gives us tools to do it — beyond untrustworthy US platforms. Inside our movement, we offer hope; outside, advocacy sometimes requires confronting fear and threat. Those are difficult messages to balance. In the UK, there’s a growing awareness that what’s happening to queer communities is the canary in the coal mine of fascism.”

Enes closed the session with optimism: “I can’t tell you how to collaborate, but I can tell you why. I come from one of the toughest countries in Europe for queer rights, yet we’re working differently now — NGOs are joining forces. I thought we’d have lost hope by now, but I see more solidarity and bigger coalitions than ever. This is the start of a new chapter — a revolution in motion.”

*The ILGA-Europe Annual Conference continues in Vilnius until this Saturday, October 25.*