

# Joint Statement: Alarming escalation in repression of LGBTI+ activists and organisations in Türkiye

[News](#), [Civil Rights and Freedom](#), [Freedom of Association](#), [Turkey](#)

The undersigned European and national human rights organisations express deep concern at the December court ruling in Türkiye shutting down LGBTI+ youth organisation, Genç LGBT?+, the lawsuit initiated against its board members, and the February lawsuit filed against LGBTI+ human rights defender Defne Güzel, noting that these cases represent very worrying examples of the repression facing LGBTI+ rights advocacy, amid renewed discussion of the retableting of draconian anti-LGBTI+ legislative proposals. We call for action ahead of the first hearing on 8 April against Genç LGBT?+ board members.

**Brussels, 7 April 2026** – In December, a first-instance court ordered the [closure](#) of Genç LGBT?+ (Genç LGBT?+ Derne?i), an LGBTI+ rights organisation based in İzmir, Türkiye, on the grounds of “obscenity” linked to past social media content of drawings posted between 2019-2022. These illustrations, created by LGBTI+ artists during online Pride events, formed part of the organisation’s legitimate human rights and community activities.

The court concluded that the visuals could ‘encourage’ people to become lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans, and that they violate public morality and [Article 41](#) (“Protection of the Family”) of the Turkish Constitution, ruling to close the association, thereby violating the exercise of the rights to freedom of expression, freedom of association and non-discrimination.

Parallel to the closure case, a criminal case was initiated against a total of 11 people, including members of the association’s executive board and supervisory board on charges of violating the law on associations, under Articles 30(b) and 32(p) of the Associations Law, which carry a sentence of imprisonment from 1 to 3 years and a judicial fine. The first hearing will be on 8 April.

Furthermore, in February a lawsuit was [filed](#) against Defne Güzel, Chair of the board of May 17 Association, another LGBTI+ rights organisation in Türkiye. Defne is accused of violating the Law on Associations on the grounds that a book and an exhibition catalogue published by the association were “contrary to public morality.” She is also facing a 1 to 3 years prison sentence and judicial fine under the same provisions as the Genç LGBT?+ executives.

If convicted, both Defne and Genç LGBT?+ executives will also be stripped of certain rights under Article 53 of the Turkish Criminal Code. These rights also include the right to become a member of the board of directors or supervisory board of a civil society organisation. This further targets not only individuals but also Genç LGBT?+'s and May 17 Association’s right to freedom of association.

These cases follow a series of audits of LGBTI+ organisations in 2024. In both Genç LGBT?+ and Defne’s cases the proceedings raise serious concerns regarding due process, including the speed of the proceedings and the prosecutor’s decisions to indict despite expert and audit reports indicating no wrongdoing. In addition, Defne is being [held accountable](#) for other people’s social media posts which use the #MyIntersexStory tag. Genç LGBT?+ has announced its intention to appeal.

Over the past several years, Türkiye has witnessed a sustained deterioration in respect for the freedoms of expression, association, and peaceful assembly, with LGBTI+ people and organisations particularly targeted.

Within the framework of declaring 2025 as the “Year of the Family,” the Ministry of Family and Social Services issued a circular in May 2025 targeting universal rights-based concepts such as gender and LGBTI+ equality. This period has also been marked by [repeated bans](#) on Pride events, mass detentions of LGBTI+ human rights defenders and journalists, the targeting of artistic and journalistic expression, and regulatory and administrative measures that have particularly exposed LGBTI+ people to heightened risks. Most notably, in 2025 authorities twice attempted to introduce legal measures that would [criminalise](#) LGBTI+ persons and LGBTI+ advocacy (introducing so-called “anti-LGBT propaganda” measures), and in February this year renewed discussions signal that these measures are likely to be reintroduced. This follows a tightening of restrictions to access to gender affirming treatment under regulations that came into effect in June 2025.

These legal measures formalise discriminatory practices that have long been institutionalised and represent a constant threat to LGBTI+ civil society. In parallel, LGBTI+ civil society organisations have increasingly been subjected to unprecedented and discriminatory administrative scrutiny. Government-sanctioned audits, formally presented as routine oversight, have in practice gone far beyond standard CSO accountability requirements.

### **Why this case matters beyond a single organisation**

The closure of Genç LGBTI+ cannot be viewed as an isolated judicial decision. It represents a significant escalation in an already established pattern of repression. Since 2021, at least six associations have faced [closure cases](#) in Türkiye, reflecting a worrisome trend. Four of them, including Genç LGBTI+, were dissolved, and two of the cases are ongoing.

One of the ongoing dissolution cases against the Tarlabasi Community Center (TCC) in Istanbul also claims that the association acted contrary to the law and morality for their LGBTI+ -inclusive gender equality work with women and children. Similar to Genç LGBTI+, the chairperson of TCC faced a criminal investigation for obscenity that was eventually closed, but she is currently on trial for violating the law on associations.

Furthermore, with the targeting of Defne Güzel in February, as well as [Enes Hocaogullari](#) and [Yildiz Tar](#) in 2025, we see a rapidly increasing trend of targeting individual leaders of the LGBTI+ human rights movement in Türkiye. This further adds to the climate of intimidation of LGBTI+ activism, and demonstrates how existing laws are being used to achieve outcomes similar to so-called “anti-propaganda” legislation, even in the absence of newly adopted laws.

These attacks on LGBTI+ human rights organisations are set to continue, as new audits are foreseen this year, and the draconian amendments criminalising LGBTI+ people and restricting rights are being discussed for retabling in parliament. Concerted action is therefore needed to safeguard the enjoyment for LGBTI+ people and CSOs to their rights to freedom of association, assembly and expression, including artistic expression. The current crackdown on all three of these fundamental rights for LGBTI+ people and CSOs is symptomatic of democratic decline and poses a serious threat to rights and equality for Türkiye’s LGBTI+ community.

### **The undersigned organisations urge the Government of Türkiye to:**

1. Remove amendments aimed at restricting rights and introducing discrimination against LGBTI+ persons from future legislation;
2. Immediately halt discriminatory audits of organisations working with LGBTI+ communities;
3. Stop using morality and obscenity laws to suppress LGBTI+ expression and association;
4. Ensure fair and independent proceedings in the Genç LGBTI+ and Defne Güzel cases;
5. Guarantee equal and non-discriminatory treatment of all civil society organisations under the law.

### **We further call on the European Union to:**

1. Condemn draft anti-LGBTI+ provisions and call for their removal from draft legislative proposals;

2. Explicitly raise the discriminatory use of audits against LGBTI+ organisations in its dialogue with Türkiye;
3. Treat the closure of Genç LGBTI+ as a prominent example of the erosion of the rule of law and a violation of the right to freedoms of association and expression;
4. Reiterate that human rights are a non-negotiable and integral part of the EU's relations with Türkiye and that therefore tangible human rights improvements are essential to deepening bilateral trade and investment.

### **We also call on the Council of Europe to:**

1. Condemn draft anti-LGBTI+ provisions and call for their removal from draft legislative proposals;
2. Closely monitor discriminatory audits targeting organisations working on LGBTI+ topics in Türkiye;
3. Engage authorities to reaffirm that such practices violate European Convention on Human Rights standards;
4. Clearly state that portraying LGBTI+ identities or work as obscene or harmful is incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights.

### **How you can help**

- Share this statement widely on social media, tagging your country's Minister of Foreign Affairs and your country's MEPs;
- Join Amnesty International's Urgent Action: write to Izmir Chief Public Prosecutor demanding the dropping of all criminal charges against Genç LGBTI+ board members:  
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/EUR44/0823/2026/en/>

### **Signatories**

1. Accept Association, Romania
2. Accept LGBTI Cyprus
3. Albanian Human Rights Group, Albania
4. Araminta
5. Arcigay Varese, Italy
6. Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos de España, Spain
7. Belong To LGBTQ+ Youth Services Ireland
8. bi+ equal
9. Çavaria, Belgium
10. Civicus
11. Committee for the Administration of Justice, Northern Ireland
12. EL\*C
13. ERA – LGBTI Equal Rights Association for Western Balkans and Turkey
14. Federación de Asociaciones de Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos, Spain
15. Front Line Defenders
16. [H] BRA?OV Association from Bra?ov, Romania
17. Hellenic League for Human Rights, Greece
18. IGLYO — The International LGBTQI Youth & Student Organisation
19. İnsan Hakları Derneği (Human Rights Association), Turkey
20. International Planned Parenthood Federation – European Network (IPPF EN)
21. Intersex Greece (????????? ?????????? ??????????), Greece
22. ILGA-Europe (European region of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association)
23. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
24. Kaos GL, Turkey
25. kolektIRV | For the rights of trans, intersex and gender variant persons, Croatia

26. May 17 Association, Turkey
27. MGRM-Malta LGBTIQ Rights Movement, Malta
28. NGO Fulcrum UA, Ukraine
29. Norwegian Helsinki Committee, Norway
30. Prisme, Belgium
31. Protection International
32. Rainbow Families Croatia
33. Rainbow Ignite, Serbia
34. Sarajevo Open Centre, Bosnia & Herzegovina
35. TGEU
36. ÜniKuir Association, Turkey
37. World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
38. Zagreb Pride, Croatia
39. ILGA Portugal
40. FELGTBI+, Spain
41. Italy Needs Sex Education, Italy
42. I Ken Onus, Italy
43. Agedo Nazionale, Italy
44. Gaynet, Italy
45. Gruppo Trans Bologna, Italy
46. ILGA World