

# Statement: Alarming escalation in repression of LGBTI activists and organisations in Turkey

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Europe's leading LGBTI organisation, ILGA-Europe express deep concern at this week's court ruling in Turkey to shut down the LGBTI youth organisation, Genç LGBTI, noting that this is serious escalation in ongoing tactics of repression.

**Brussels, 19 December 2025** – A first-instance court decision has ordered the closure of Genç LGBTI (Genç LGBTI+ Derneği), a civil society organisation (CSO) based in the city of İzmir in Turkey. The decision is grounded in allegations of “obscenity” related to five illustrations shared on the organisation's social media accounts several years ago. These visuals, produced by LGBTI artists during online Pride activities, were produced and shared in accordance with the organisation's statute and mandate.

The court's reasoning explicitly claims that these visuals could ‘encourage’ people to become lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans, and that they violate public morality and Article 41 of the Turkish Constitution.

The case followed an audit carried out alongside inspections of other LGBTI organisations. The proceedings and ruling raise serious concerns regarding due process, including the speed with which the reasoned decision was issued, alongside reported changes in judicial assignment shortly before the hearing. Genç LGBTI has announced its intention to appeal.

## Part of an escalating pattern of repression

Over the past several years, Turkey has witnessed a steady deterioration in respect for the rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly, with LGBTI people and organisations disproportionately affected. This period has been marked by repeated bans on Pride events, mass detentions of LGBTI activists and journalists, the targeting of artistic and journalistic expression, and regulatory and administrative measures that have particularly exposed LGBTI people to heightened risks.

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. These audits have demanded excessive documentation, scrutinised lawful expression and visibility work, and placed LGBTI organisations under sustained surveillance. This differential treatment has created a climate in which LGBTI CSOs are treated as inherently suspect, reflecting a discriminatory approach incompatible with the principle of equality before the law.

## Why this case matters beyond one 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. The combination of discriminatory audits, expansive interpretations of obscenity provisions, and administrative pressure 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.

This approach sends a clear and chilling message to all LGBTI organisations in Turkey: compliance with existing regulations offers no protection, and past lawful activities can be retrospectively criminalised. If left unchallenged, this practice risks normalising the dismantling of CSOs through administrative and judicial means, further shrinking civic space and undermining democratic safeguards.

ILGA-Europe call on the Government of Turkey to immediately end discriminatory audits of LGBTI organisations, stop using morality and obscenity laws to suppress LGBTI expression and association, ensure fair and independent appeal proceedings in the Genç LGBTI case, and guarantee equal and non-discriminatory treatment of all civil society organisations under the law.

We further call on the European Union to explicitly raise the discriminatory use of audits against LGBTI organisations in its dialogue with Turkey, treat the closure of Genç LGBTI as a systemic rule of law and freedom of association concern, and ensure that EU–Turkey relations include clear human rights conditionality protecting civil society from discriminatory administrative practices.

We also call on the Council of Europe to closely monitor discriminatory audits targeting LGBTI organisations in Turkey, engage authorities to reaffirm that such practices violate Convention standards, and clearly state that portraying LGBTI identities or work as obscene or harmful is incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights.

All international institutions, civil society organisations, and human rights defenders must stand in solidarity with the LGBTI movement in Turkey. At this critical moment, collective and visible support is essential to resist further repression, protect organisations and individuals at risk, and uphold the principles of equality, dignity, and fundamental freedoms. Silence or inaction will only embolden discriminatory practices and deepen the erosion of democratic space. We urge all actors to use their influence, platforms, and mechanisms to ensure that LGBTI people and organisations in Turkey are not left isolated, and that their rights are defended in line with international human rights standards.