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TÜRKİYE

ALLOW PRIDE MARCHES TO PROCEED

Pride events in Türkiye are once again at risk. For years, local authorities have banned these peaceful marches without a legal basis. Police have often used unnecessary force to break up gatherings, even when people were simply celebrating or speaking out for their rights.

Since 2015, officials have misused laws like the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations (Law No. 2911) and the Law on Provincial Administration (Law No. 5442) to justify these bans. But these actions go against Türkiye's human rights commitments.

This year must be different. The government must stop using unlawful restrictions to silence Pride. Authorities have a legal responsibility to protect peaceful assemblies, not block them.

Write to the Turkish Interior Minister urging him to:

- Ensure that Türkiye fulfills its legal duty to enable the right to peaceful assembly.
- Protect the right to freedom of expression and uphold the right to non-discrimination.
- Allow Pride marches in Istanbul and across the country to proceed without undue restrictions.

Write to:

Mr. Ali Yerlikaya

Minister of Interior

Email: ozelkalem@icisleri.gov.tr , diab@icisleri.gov.tr

Salutation: Dear Minister,

And copy:

His Excellency Can Dizdar

Ambassador

Embassy of the Republic of Türkiye

197 Wurtemberg Street

Ottawa, ON K1N 8L9

Tel: (613) 244-2470 Fax: (613) 789-3442

Email: embassy.ottawa@mfa.gov.tr

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since 2015, authorities in Türkiye have repeatedly blocked Pride marches and related events. These bans violate the rights to peaceful assembly, free expression, and non-discrimination. These rights are protected by the Turkish Constitution, as well as international treaties like the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and European human rights laws.

Officials have imposed blanket bans not only on marches but also on Pride-related activities such as film screenings and picnics. In 2022, LGBTI rights groups reported at least 10 Pride events were banned across the country, and more than 530 people were detained during that year's Pride season.

In 2023, bans were issued in at least six provinces, including Eskişehir, Aydın, and Antalya, and in several districts of Istanbul. These restrictions lasted from one day to an entire month. That year, at least 224 people were arbitrarily detained. Those detained included peaceful protesters, lawyers, journalists, foreign nationals, and even bystanders. Many faced intimidation or prosecution without cause, creating a climate of fear and discouraging participation in future events.

In 2024, the crackdown continued. Authorities once again banned Pride events, used force against peaceful gatherings, and publicly targeted LGBTI activists and allies. Although fewer people were arrested this time, this was not due to greater tolerance. Rather, the drop in arrests reflected the chilling effect of years of repression. Organizers had to become more cautious and creative to stay safe and avoid police violence.

Despite the risks, some groups held small solidarity actions. These efforts were important but limited by fear of punishment and further restrictions.

Under both national and international law, Türkiye has a legal duty to protect and enable peaceful protests. The Turkish Constitution says that people have the right to peaceful assembly without needing government approval. This means that blanket bans are not only harmful, but they are also illegal. They are a form of discrimination against LGBTI communities and a violation of basic freedoms.

Any effort to stop a peaceful protest must follow clear rules: it must be legal, necessary, and proportionate. Force should be used only as a last resort, and only if truly needed to protect public safety. Even then, it must be carefully limited.

The continued suppression of Pride events and the targeting of LGBTI rights defenders show a clear pattern of rights violations. Türkiye must respect its obligations and ensure that all people can gather and express themselves safely and freely.

Please take action as soon as possible until August 7, 2025. The UA will be duly updated should there be the need for further action.