

**Joint statement:
IGLYO, the European Youth Forum and
the Council of Europe Advisory Council on Youth**

For the third year in a row, the Istanbul LGBTI+ Pride March was banned and protestors attacked by police, in fact being prevented from exercising their human rights by the Turkish government.

Over the last 25 years, the Istanbul LGBTI+ Pride Week has been celebrated during the last week of June and the Pride March has taken place on the last Sunday of June since 2003. Until 2015 it had mostly been a peaceful and joyous occasion.^[1]

For the third year in a row, the Istanbul LGBTI+ Pride March was banned by the local government shortly before the set date ^[2] and participants were subjected to violence from police in the form of teargas, rubber bullets, arbitrary and discriminatory detentions.^[3] A board member of IGLYO was at the scene ([read here](#)).

This year the reasons stated by the local government for the ban were that it “evidently, received very serious reactions from different segments of society” and that “the march that is being organized will not be allowed for the safety of our citizens [...] Participants, and tourists [...] and in regards to public order, a meeting and demonstration march will not be allowed on the mentioned day, before or after”.

LGBTI+ Pride celebrators gathered at the Taksim Square in Istanbul and defied the ban in the exercise of their rights. They were met by police in riot gear who fired [rubber bullets](#), teargas and 28 protestors were detained. [The Guardian](#) reported that the heavy police presence outnumbered the activists. This is the same Police force that, according to the local government’s ban, was not able to protect the protesters.

The detained protesters were released the same day around midnight and there is information that the government is planning to prosecute the detained protesters on

¹ The local government have claimed that the application for the march 2017 wasn’t made properly but organisers notified the Governor’s office about the time and place of the march, and requested a meeting well before the march but the request was ignored.

² In 2015 the ban of the march was announced moments before it was supposed to commence with police attacking celebrating protesters to disperse them from the scene. In 2016 the Trans Pride March and LGBTI+ Pride March was banned 17th June 2017 and the same year the Ankara IDAHOT event was banned hours before by delivery of the decision in the middle of the night. In 2017 the ban of LGBTI+ Pride March was announced only one day beforehand. See also on Trans Pride 2016 [violations](#): <http://kaosgl.org/page.php?id=21942>.

³ <http://www.iglyo.com/a-pride-in-istanbul/>.

charges of *obstructing a police officer* and *State of emergency issues*. Recently, the 60th Criminal Court of Istanbul (Çağlayan Adliyesi) acquitted 13 persons charged with the same offences at Trans Pride in 2016, on the basis that they had the right to protest without obtaining a prior permission. The nationalist right-wing groups opposing LGBTI+ Pride march were present at this year's march and the ones of them that were arrested were released immediately and, in contrast to the Pride participants, were not subjected to any questions about their identity. These right-wing groups and the newspapers constantly targeting LGBT+ persons are, as a matter of fact, given a free pass to spread hatred.

IGLYO, the European Youth Forum and the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe believe firmly that it is the responsibility of the government, police and other authorities to safeguard the human rights of all persons and their right to exercise them. By banning the marches and using violence towards participants the state is in violation of freedom of assembly, association and expression. Hate from some "segments of society" towards LGBTQI people can never be made an excuse to curb our right to organise or participate in public gatherings. By banning Pride, the local government has discriminated against a vulnerable and targeted group and denied them their fundamental human rights.

IGLYO, the European Youth Forum and the Advisory Council on Youth of the Council of Europe *condemn the continued violations of human rights of LGBTQI persons in Turkey and*, in accordance with the [Resolution on the restrictive measures taken on the freedom of expression, assembly and association towards LGBTQI persons and organisations in Turkey](#) adopted by the General Assembly of the European Youth Forum in April 2017, supported by the Council of Europe Advisory Council on Youth, reaffirm our;

Support for the LGBTQI organisations in Turkey, specifically youth organisations, in their work towards equality and human rights for all;

Support for the development of a plan to adopt a legal framework for the protection of LGBTI people and to prevent homophobic and transphobic hate crimes and discrimination;

Commitment to continue following the situation for LGBTQI youth in Turkey, and to address the current situation and any possible future violations of LGBTQI young person's human rights in Turkey;

Recognise that LGBTQI+ discrimination is a violation of human rights law and therefore a holistic approach to human rights enforcement and education should be adopted. The urgency of law enforcement having the adequate tools and education needed to deal with hate crimes;

Appeal to the Council of Europe, the EU, UN and other international organisations and institutions to include LGBTQI related issues more extensively into their policy-making and implementation. Specifically, by having more contact with LGBTQI organisations in Turkey;

Urge the Council of Europe, other European and international organisations to ensure full inclusion of representatives of LGBTQI organisations and movements in Turkey and independent actors into a dialogue on shaping agendas and programmes on LGBTQI youth related issues;

Urge the Council of Europe, the EU, UN and other European and international organisations and institutions to foster democratic values, in particular in relation to LGBTQI young persons, as well as a responsible attitude towards international treaties, respect for civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of young people in Turkey

Urge the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Unit within the Council of Europe to monitor the situation in Turkey as well as to deploy all tools necessary in order to encourage the protection of LGBTQI+ persons within the region

Urge the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to address the Government of Turkey with deep concerns over the abuse of rights of LGBTQI people in Turkey.

The opinions expressed in this letter and the enclosed statement are those of the Advisory Council on Youth and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Council of Europe.