



**Statement by Gerhard Ermischer
President of the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe**

**Concerning the recent actions targeting LGBTI organisations, activists and
human rights defenders in Türkiye**

Strasbourg, 22 September 2026

The Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) of the Council of Europe is deeply concerned by reports of coordinated raids, detentions and restrictions targeting LGBTI organisations, activists and human rights defenders in Türkiye during the weekend of 12–13 September.

According to information received, judicial proceedings have reportedly been initiated against a significant number of individuals and organisations across several provinces. These proceedings have been accompanied by searches of association offices and private homes, detentions and the seizure of electronic devices. Access to the websites and social media accounts of a number of LGBTI organisations and activists has also been restricted.

Measures undertaken to investigate alleged criminal offences and protect public safety must be firmly grounded in law and comply with the principles of necessity and proportionality in pursuit of a legitimate aim. They must not be used to restrict fundamental freedoms or to target individuals and organisations because of their sexual orientation, gender identity or legitimate human rights work.

In this regard, we fully support the statements issued by

- the [Congress of Local and Regional Authorities](#),
- the [Commissioner for Human Rights](#) and
- the [General Rapporteur of the Parliamentary Assembly on the rights of LGBTI persons](#).

Being an LGBTI person, supporting LGBTI rights, or belonging to an organisation working to uphold human rights should never, in itself, constitute grounds for suspicion, intimidation or criminalisation. The invocation of “family values” cannot justify discrimination or restrictions on fundamental rights. LGBTI people are themselves members of families and communities and are entitled to the same protection of their rights and dignity as everyone else.

The Conference of INGOs recalls that freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly and association are fundamental human rights protected by Articles 10 and 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Independent civil society organisations are an essential component of a democratic society. They contribute to public debate, support vulnerable communities, promote human rights and strengthen inclusive democratic participation.

As President of the Conference of INGOs, I call on the Turkish authorities to ensure that LGBTI organisations, activists and human rights defenders are treated equally to all other citizens and civil society organisations under the law; are not targeted or discriminated against; and have their human rights and civic freedoms fully upheld, as guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights.

I further urge the authorities to protect civil society's rights to freedom of association, freedom of assembly and freedom of online expression, intervening only in necessary and proportionate ways in exceptional and legally legitimate circumstances, subject to effective and independent judicial scrutiny.

Those who exercise their fundamental freedoms peacefully should not face intimidation, discrimination or criminalisation for doing so.

The Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe stands in solidarity with civil society organisations, human rights defenders and local and regional actors working peacefully to uphold human rights, equality and inclusive democratic participation.

The Conference of INGOs therefore recalls its own [Recommendation \(CONF/AG\(2025\)REC2\) on the shrinking Civic Space and actual political developments](#), adopted on 9 April 2025, which calls on member states to uphold the values and principles of the Council of Europe and ensure the full implementation of its conventions and recommendations. It also calls on the Council of Europe itself to promote and protect more actively these values in its member states. We remind Türkiye that it has voluntarily signed up to these principles and, in doing so, has undertaken a commitment to uphold them in both letter and spirit.

The Conference of INGOs will continue to follow developments in Türkiye closely and remains committed to protecting the space in which civil society can operate freely, independently and safely throughout the Council of Europe.
