

Rainbow Knows No Borders



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Cover

A Piece from "A Happy Day" Workshop among Refugee LGBTI+ in Eskişehir/2018

Art Page

Shermin, "Identity"

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EDITOR'S NOTE

This special issue is an outcome of a dream and policy and also a very difficult, but an instructive, exciting process. Before we go to the cause of this assessment, perhaps the story of the emergence of the Kaos GL magazine will make it all more understandable. Kaos GL Magazine, which has been published continuously since 1994, arose from a group of homosexuals' need for producing their own words, and has been continuing to say it for 25 years. Since then, it has been an area where many LGBTIs and anyone, who has a say against the imposed gender norms, can express themselves.

Carrying a wish to include the state of being refugee into the LGBTI movement's agenda since 2007 and with this very intention to create areas of solidarity with the Refugee LGBTIs, Kaos GL continues to work under the Refugee Rights Program with a team of three from the beginning of 2017. Mentioned team inquired "why not the words of persons more special and braver than the other whom they met in different cities of Turkey take part in KAOS GL Magazine?" and came up with an idea which they see as a tool of "writing together activity" rather than speaking "on behalf of the subjects and about the subjects".

This publication aims to oppose the practices and norms that ignore the persons who have different qualities and skills, yet are being de-identified under the "refugee" identity.

As Kaos GL, we know that everyone we met is more than a "case number" and "a temporary subject" waiting in Turkey to be resettled into a third country. All of us and each of us are more than all of these with our past, our future, our

professions, our art, our struggle, our sadness and our love; and whichever country we're in, we will continue to be so. No discriminatory and ignoring practice will change it.

Of course, the difficulty we encountered in preparing this issue was the fact that we did not speak Arabic and Farsi languages. Considering our publication policy not to publish any sexist, homophobic, biphobic, transphobic, racist, speciesist texts in Kaos GL magazine, our lack of understanding of a text in a language we do not know created a very challenging feeling when combined with the concern of not containing a text contradicting with our mentioned policy. Nevertheless, this difficulty is overcome by the valuable efforts of our dear interpreters.

Our valuable friends who contributed to the issue shared their experiences in activism, art, sports, education, family life along with their past, present and empowerment processes. A Queen Behind Bars told about her observations about LGBTI movement in Iraq and gave clues about how to knit solidarity between refugee LGBTIs and non-refugee LGBTIs in Turkey. Artin mentioned of their encounters in working life as a non-binary refugee in Turkey and their Istanbul Pride Walk experience. Bated Writer talked about his experiences of being a Middle Eastern gay man. In our interview with Donna, she told her experience of being queer, refugee and married with children. Fariman Kashani gave advices to refugee LGBTIs about access to right of education. Keven presented sections from his life in Iraq. Draco contributed to the issue with two different literary genres, including short story and poem. M. J. from Syria told the story of his asylum trajectory to Turkey, while Ramtin

Zigorat shared their experiences of activism in Iran and Turkey. Shaya wrote her past, present and her experiences in a Deportation Center in Turkey. Shermin wrote about her being an Iranian transgender artist and S. Gh. told the story of her farewell to Iran. Mika, Bahri, Medrik and Dayan shared their experiences of being professional sportspersons and relationship they build with the sport. Anonymous writers talked about what they dreamed of for their own and for all LGBTIs.

In this issue, you can also find corners of Frequently Asked Questions and False Facts on Sexual Health; Legal Rights; Gender Re-Assignment Process; UNHCR and Resettlement into a Third Country. There are also the counselling services provided by the Kaos GL Refugee Rights Program and the story of Kaos GL's activities in the field. You can also find information about the organizations that refugees can receive support and counselling in Turkey. The issue also includes a compilation of beautiful Arabic songs with queer tunes.

As Kaos GL, we have visited 5 different cities in the last two years as part of the Project "Advancing the Human Rights of LGBTI Refugees in Turkey" which we conducted together with UNHCR, and met with refugees with LGBTI declaration. We listened to their problems and challenges they faced in accessing rights and services, in order to report to relevant institutions working in the field, especially to UNHCR, and to play a facilitating role among institutions. Besides, we organized trainings on "Legal Rights and Responsibilities, Sexual Health; Gender Re-Assignment Process and UNHCR's Role and Mission in Turkey" in Denizli, Eskişehir,

Yalova, Istanbul. Again, in the same provinces, we organized solidarity matches and picnics to "Say Stop to Homophobia, Transphobia, Bifobia and all Borders". We have also had Digital Storytelling Workshops where beautiful works have been produced and some of which you can find in this issue as well.

It was very valuable for us to come together in all these activities, to have fun, to play football, to laugh, to produce together and most importantly to share a happy day.

We would like to thank all of our trainers who were with us during all these trainings and activities for sharing their all valuable knowledge, experience and support.

And we want to thank our dear comrade, our translator Mahbubeh, for her kind support, energy and sincerity in all our challenging times.

Of course, we would like to express our gratitude to colleagues from UNHCR Protection and Program Units who did not spare their support and understanding from us during the creation of this issue.

Lastly, we would like to extend our gratitude to all refugee LGBTIs who shared their valuable stories with us and make this magazine possible, with whom we learn together and transform. This solidarity, which we believe strengthens us, also directs the policy of Kaos GL's Refugee Rights Program.

Without solidarity, this magazine wouldn't be.

Pleasant readings

Kaos GL Refugee Rights Program



“Phobia is not something automatically constructed but is a result of defective and unlettered mind. The most important factor to generating phobia is ignorance and ineptitude, the more we increase our information about the problems definitely the less we feel a phobia in ourselves. Let us fight the ignorance.”

Fariman Kashani

I'm Fariman. I live in Turkey and deal with social activities in the field of refugees and LGBTI's rights. Around two years ago I started to work voluntarily with UNHCR and as a delegate of young asylum seeker I tried to provide the right to education with all young asylum seekers.

In Iran, I was in my last year of Civil Engineering when I was fired from the school due to my dif-

ferent sexual orientation. The most significant aim in my life has always been learning and training and in Iran; they deprived me of it due to being an LGBTI, but I did not let my being an LGBTI deprive me of my right to education.

I think LGBTI people are always isolated in school due to their being different. There is no one to remind them that you are normal and you should not be ashamed of falling in love with your homosexual classmate. That is why school usually is not a favored place to be in for LGBTIs.

¹ Editor's note: In original Farsi text, the writer uses the word "DEGERBASHAN" which is mostly used as an umbrella term for LGBTI+s in Farsi language.

There is a basic right for every child to enjoy a free and healthy environment for education but unfortunately this right has been violated.

In Turkey, I started to find some ways to study and in different meetings I informed my friends of it. After those meetings, some of my friends found ways to study and many of them could study by distance learning. I myself got a scholarship for programming from Google and now I am studying and working online. In online classes and chat forums not only nobody cares about my sexual orientation and gender but also, they know me by my skills and diligences.

Many of asylum seekers have not been able to bring their educational documents with themselves to Turkey due to leaving country mandatorily and hurriedly. Fortunately, The Turkish Ministry of Education accepts these asylum seekers to get their diploma provided that they can pass some exams but unfortunately those who do not have their bachelor, master and PHD diplomas with themselves cannot find their equivalent degrees in Turkey.

The criteria in labor market day in and day out tends more and more to the skills and knowledge but unfortunately many of business opportunities still require university degrees.

Unlike what people think, I suggest that the number of educated people in our society is vast. For me, being educated does not mean just being in school and having university degrees. Every day I try to learn new things by talking with people, reading books and surfing the Net. But never have I believed a saying or a text without reason and evidence.

Homophobia has two parts; homosexual and phobia. Phobia is about homosexuals, and treating them with prejudice and being indifferent about gaining a scientific and true knowledge of homosexuality and also insisting on inherited prejudices! Phobia is not something automatically constructed but is a result of defective and unlettered mind. The most important factor to generating phobia is ignorance and ineptitude, the more we increase our information about the problems definitely the less we feel a phobia in

ourselves. Let us fight the ignorance. It is difficult but possible:

One of the refugees' problems in Turkey, or let us say their biggest one, is that they do not have work permit. Many of refugees work hard in intolerable conditions and they are also illegal. Among them, LGBTI refugees due to their different appearance have less opportunities to find these jobs.²

Working hours are long and wages are at minimum level. So, arranging time and the cost for education is hard to get. Organizations such as ASAM and UNHCR have allocated some funds for education by which refugees can enjoy them after being registered in the universities.

Do not be afraid:

Entering Turkish universities is not as difficult as refugees think. I always suggest my friends that it is better to Google the name of universities and get some information about registration by their websites, going to the universities and talking with students and lecturers. Do not be afraid of your low points and GPA and take some exams such as YÖS and SAT to have a better chance of being selected.

A university that is not a university is not a university!³

Kiron.ngo provides the refugees with free online education. My suggestion to those refugees who want to study or are currently studying is to take a look at this website. This website helps you to first learn the required language for education and secondly pass the prerequisites, so if you have forgotten some subjects or you want to learn them from basic levels there is no need to be worried about it since this website has done it before: from finding a classmate and providing educational consultation to finding a proper university to continue education abroad.

I hope a day comes in which education and information would be accessible for all people.

² For detailed information about work permit see "FAQs about Legal Rights".

³ Editor's note: This sentence is a reference to a political statement that Ruhollah Khomeini said about universities in Iran.



Arab Songs About Homosexuality, Polyamory, and Gender

Maribel Haddad

In the ongoing social dialogue between the conservative and liberal views in the Arab world, various debates, arguments, and mutual influences emerge and flourish across different axes and areas of life. Over the past few years, personal rights and freedoms have come under spotlight in the Arab world, a phenomenon that has been reflected in the various music scenes, through songs that address society and all its segments and groups. Subsequently, a number of artists have used music as a participatory space to shed light on stories featuring issues related to homosexuality, gender, and personal freedoms. These are some of the most popular examples.

Shahrazad - Therese Sleiman

Perhaps the most famous song by Palestinian artist Therese Sleiman is Shahrazad. She went up on stage, danced and sang barefoot while an anklet jingling to the rhythms of gypsy mel-

odies. The song is about an intense love affair, and Sleiman recalls with nostalgia the rain that carries the fragrance of a woman's body.

"When our hands meet, my lips on hers, what's left but the world but winter, winter, winter..."

In her latest album, Sleiman reprises the same theme with *Shahrayar* in Classical Arabic, striking the same tone in glorifying love and women.

Shim El Yasmine - Mashrou' Leila

Mashrou' Leila have reached a high level of popularity for their rebellious songs and melodies, often calling for the recognition of the rights of minorities and freedom of speech. In their song, *Shim El Yasmin*, the band's lead singer, Hamed Sinno, sings about a former relationship between a young man and his boyfriend, who walked away and left him alone. The lyrics are filled with an anguished desire for the couple

to be able to live a normal life in a society that stands against homosexuality and punishes those who practice it. He nostalgically recalls the relationship, sorrowfully beseeching his former love to “remember to remember” him, and “never forget” him.

Imm El Jacket - Mashrou' Leila

In another Mashrou' Leila song, the band sings about a short-haired girl, who wears a cap and goes out with no makeup, in stark contrast with the typical style prevalent among women from her society. She supposedly looks so different that she is mistaken as male, especially as she does whatever she wants, with no regard for the opinion of others—a freedom that is often perceived to be the privilege of men alone. The song celebrates the idea that every human being is free to look and behave as they wish.

B'hebbik - Jame3 Taksir and Rola Azzar

As part of an initiative by the Palestinian association, alQaws for Sexual & Gender Diversity, in support of polyamory and LGBTQ rights, the Ghanni A`an Taa`rif project sings about the life of homosexuals and trans individuals living within communities that are antipathic to change. B'hebbik is a song about a young woman who confesses her love for another woman. It goes on to describe their relation, which was full of passion since they were little. The girl is so deeply in love, she screams in out loud at the barrier wall separating Israel and Palestine, without fear nor shame.

Al-Qasida al-Shareera - Jame' Taksir

A rendition of a poem by celebrated Syrian poet Nizar Qabbani, the song is about a sexual relationship between two women. The lyrics describe the relationship, and the passion they share.

Zamzam - Jame' Taksir

The lyrics tell a story of a young man whose behavior, looks, and lifestyle are “different”, who grows up with expectations of becoming like other men, within the framework of the traditional definition of “manhood”. He becomes depressed, and develops a sense of not belong-

ing. Finally, he finds someone who supports his unique character and encourages him to be who he wants to be, and not change himself to comply with the standards imposed on him the society.

Ana Hurra B'hali - Maisa Daw

The song is about a girl who is fed up with discrimination from society, when she meets a girl with similar feelings. Together, their perspective on the world changes, and they feel love for the first time. The lyrics argue that people's different orientations do not make them less human.

Manakir - Haya Zaatreh

The song describes the stereotypes imposed on all segments of society, and the limited paths available for those who wish to be different. The female protagonist revolts against these stereotypical views imposed on her, refusing to walk with the herd.

Ghanni A`an Taa`rif also includes a song called Thalath Qasa'id (Three Poems), with lyrics by Shahd Issawi and performed by Riyad Sliman. The song is inspired by the Greek philosopher Plato's philosophy on love.



Tayf - Mashrou' Leila

From their album, Ibn El Leil, the song Tayf recalls a nightclub that was closed due to the sexuality of its frequenters. The words illustrate the status of gay and transgender people in closed communities, as well as the extent of humiliation and violence exercised against them by security forces, and the marginalization and persecution they are subjected to by the surrounding society. The lyrics criticize the exclusion of homosexuality from official historical accounts, noting—in one of the strongest lyrics of the song—that no matter how much intellectual and moral degeneracy proliferate, there will still be those who will fight for their rights to be different and free.

Ji't Ela Ahli - Ghanni A'an Taa`rif

The song is about a homosexual man who comes out of the closet and confronts his family with his sexual orientation, but they do not accept him. He is forced to leave his hometown and live with his longing for his family. The mournful song expresses the alienation many homosexuals are exposed to when they confront their families, but are not accepted.

El Haram - Dina El Wedidi

The young Egyptian sings about the concept

of the loves and the lives of women in the Arab world, especially in the communities where women cannot live their lives as they may wish. She confronts those negative thoughts with lyrics about the beauty of love and art, which are neither shameful nor haram (sinful).

Hayamtni - Ghalia Benali

Tunisian singer Ghalia Benali is famous for her songs for and about women. Although the songs are not directed at a particular gender or sexuality, Benali is very popular in the LGBTQ community, due to her lyrics in support of love in all its, particularly addressing the women in many of her songs. The most prominent of these songs are Hayamtni, Lamouni Li Gharou Meni, and Awaddu.

These songs expose various aspects of personal freedom, as well as on the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender, as well as the queer community. Through her songs, Benali creates a space to reconsider the position of LGBTQ communities in the Middle East, taking a step toward changing the laws that limit their rights and freedoms. Benali's songs contain different stories and messages, but the recurrent theme is respect for differences and the expansion of the spectrum of freedoms.





“I was working hard to disrupt my thinking but step by step I figured out that it was a wrong method. After that, I sought to be with LGBT family and I rescued myself from my self-build prison...”

Artin

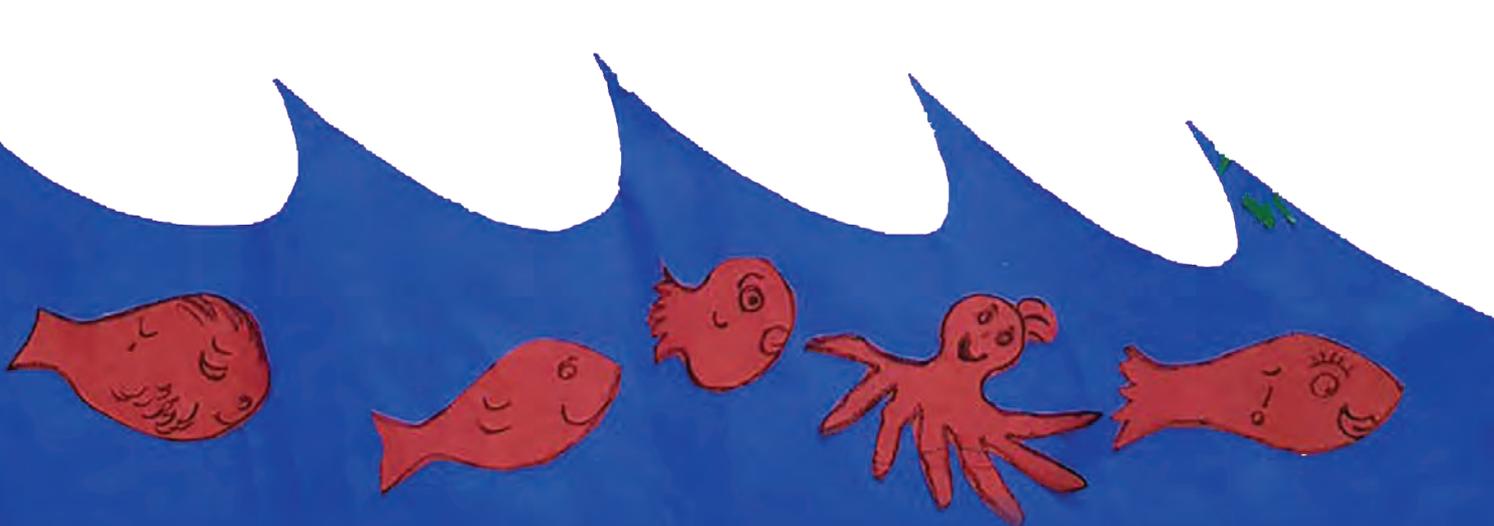
Hi, I'm Artin. Artin means purity and sanctity. For many people, it is a male name but for me that I see myself beyond male-female sexes is not as such. I am a homosexual. I was born as a girl, but I do not want to be called a man or a woman.

Others can call me just by my name, Artin. I can be a queer or a non-binary. Artin, is not the name what my family chose for me. When I came to Turkey, a new period of my life began and I need a new name for my new life, a name that I love.

Let me shortly explain my life experience in Turkey.

As a refugee in Turkey, I have been here for 4 years. My refugee life started with lots of difficulties. There was no work to do, where it was, they did not give it to foreigners because we did not have work permits and if we could not get a job, there would be no financial support to afford basic needs. We were all alone by ourselves. I did not know Turkish. Finally, by the help of those Iranians who had come here before me and had learned a little Turkish language, I could find a job in a towel manufacture. I had to work 12 hours a day with low wage and short rest time while feeling missed, homesick and alone. For a person like me who had not experienced a life as such it was incredibly difficult. But the most difficult thing I have faced was this question: are you a boy or a girl. My answer was I am Artin, my gender is not your business but this answer has also its disadvantages. For example, when manual work increased I was told to help men, if I refused, they would say that "if you are a girl tell us and go deal with jobs that belong to girls" but for me there was no chance except putting up with the situation. I gradually get used to this kind of life. Now after 4 years of uncertainty I sometimes give myself up to despair, my body cannot physically and mentally put up with these difficult jobs. Anyway, there is no way but tolerating these situations. I hope

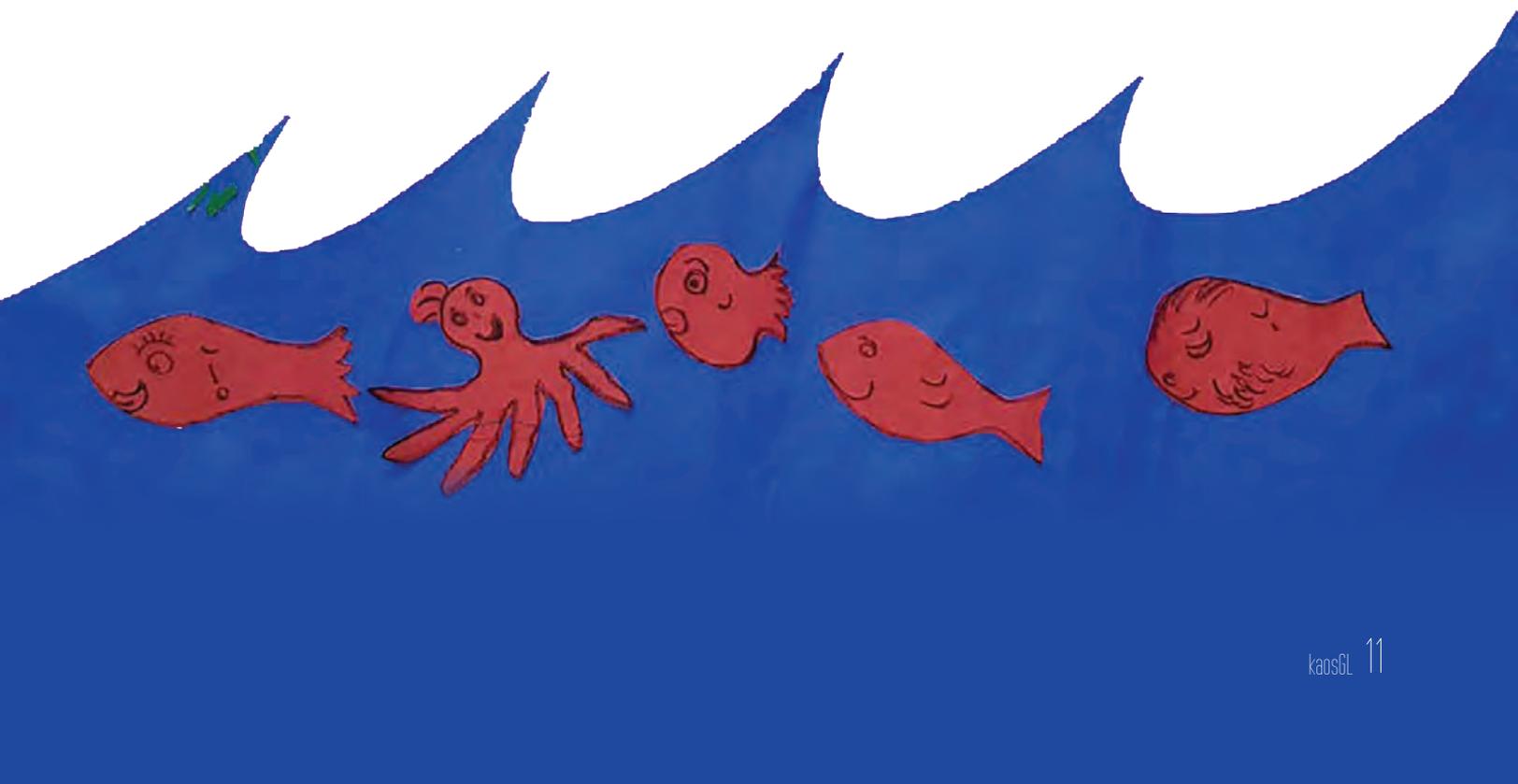
my life gets back on the rails. I cannot make a long-term plan for my life due to my refugee condition. I know nothing about the future, maybe one day more, or a month, or a year or 10 years I will live here but knowing nothing about how much it takes time makes my life stagnant. Despite all of these difficulties related to being a refugee in Turkey, I feel good and this makes me happy since here I can live as I am, without fearing about declaring my identity as a homosexual. My calm here is more than Iran. In Iran, I could not live as I wanted. On the one hand, I was frightened by the government and on the other hand, by people and family. Once, I had tried to explain my sexual orientation to my family but due to their disturbing treats I lived 12 years by wearing a mask to conceal my real 'self'. In Turkey life goes on with difficulties too; here, also there are lots of people who do not accept me but here I'm dare enough to unmask myself and declare that I am a homosexual. I behave as I want and I am not obliged to change myself, my life and also my dress due to a fear about my sexual orientation being heard by someone and got threatened by him/her. Many people oppose me but there are also those who accept me. That is so precious for a person like me, whose even most intimate family members, have not tried to understand or just do not annoy him/her. My father died when I was in Turkey and my biggest remorse is that why my father did not want to hear his child and ac-



cept they as they are even until his death? Why? What was my fault?

I wish one day I could tell my family about all the difficulties I have faced and still facing with to feel myself not alone, but I and many others like I are actually alone because we are not those whose families expect them to be. So, I decided to be strong and to have my own family, I mean LGBT family. Together we can fight against oppositions and difficulties and make a beautiful life for ourselves. I got to know it late but I am happy for knowing that because I was isolated and I did not participate in any LGBT groups, I had summarized my life in working. I was working hard to disrupt my thinking but step by step I figured out that it was a wrong method. After that, I sought to be with LGBT family and I rescued myself from my self-build prison so I started to attend the meetings of LGBTs, made many friends and found more motivations to live. For the first time, in the first day of May, International Day of Workers, in 2018, together with my LGBT friends I went to the street of the city in which I have lived in Turkey with a rainbow flag. I have lived for 4 years in this city but I did not have such an experience by pouring into streets hand in hand with LGBT family without feeling frightened in order to say that we do exist, see us, do not disturb us. And even, some people supported us.

I have always wished to attend in Pride parade but it was usually in Istanbul and the police did not let us leave our city, or at least it was so hard to get the permission. Fortunately, my Turkish friend helped me to get the permission to go to Istanbul, although it was so difficult. In Istanbul, it was Pride parade week and I was there. Maybe for some people it is a tiny wish but for me it was a big one and I can say that it was my best week in Turkey, a week assigned to the LG-BTs in which lots of them from all over Turkey gathered together in Istanbul. Although Turkish government banned the parade, the LGBT campaigners did their best to hold it, from galleries and workshops about homosexuality to our own parties. Under this condition that the government does not support LGBT activists, the tenacity of my friends impressed me. Finally, came Pride day, everywhere including Taksim Square and Istiklal Street were full of police forces, however our friends were there. Finally, police let us enter a small alley to gather together and hold the parade. Although they banned the parade, the gathering of such a mass of LGBTs shouting slogans and singing songs was a very magnificent feeling. The police blockaded alley and around one hour later started to alert people to leave there. Time was low but it was good and I wish one day I could experience it once more without feeling frightened in a day that belongs to us and is our celebration.





Interviews with Sportsperson in Eskişehir

Could you tell us about your experiences as sportspersons here in Turkey and back in Iran?

Mika: Hi, I was playing basketball previously. In Iran the guys know me as Mika.

I started to play basketball when I was in the middle school. In the vocational school, I commenced to play basketball professionally and I managed to enter my city's club called X. To speak clearly, I could not afford to have a coach and play professionally so I decided to learn it by myself. I had played for four years since the middle school. A day when I was practicing in

the City Park I met with a guy who introduced me to one of the best coaches and I managed to enter the X but as I said before, I could not afford it and there was no one to support me.

Due to my sexual orientation, I was not supported by my family. Due to this I could not do my job as I had wished. Although there were some guys who worked with coaches and managed to enter the club, I could do it by myself and performed well in that the coaches accepted me. Before that, I was a swimmer but due to the problems faced with there I gave up and that is why I do not want much to talk about it. I left

Iran in order to catch my dreams, at least about the sports I like them.

Now in Turkey, we are gathering with other refugees to make a team, we collected money to buy a ball. We are given a court to play in. I hope sport can improve our morale despite all the difficulties we have in Turkey and I hope all guys who seek to catch their dreams can be successful and achieve whatever they want.

Bahri: I'm Bahri, I'm 28 years of old, and I have played basketball from 2000 in women's club. Due to my short hairs and the problems my appearance was manly, I did not wear a mantou so I had certain problems. In 2006 when I was in X Club, I entered the X Province Super League. As I was among best women guards and my hair was partly white and I was born in 1989. I was not well-informed about what problems do exist for a one whose appearance is manly, that his/her soul is in not harmony with his/her body and actually he/she carries two bodies in one soul. They dismissed me from basketball because they did not accept me as a transsexual while it is an honor for me. After that a friend of mine helped me to start practicing in women rugby. You can google my name, I mean my previous name when I had attended the Korean Tournament I have also played in Laos, Singapore and Puna, I was among the best transits and scraps. My Iranian coach's husband, let me point out to her name, X's husband who was really unfair to me found out that I have undergone a gender reassignment surgery. In those days, my breasts were extracted out due to mastectomy but as I liked practicing sports I used a blouse filled with socks to show my breasts. I was dismissed from the club due to that and then my name was put on the black list in a way that I was deprived of going to women clubs and playing with a woman style. Unfortunately, I detached myself from the sport. Then I was forced to work Iran as I needed to collect money for my operation.

I came here, but again due to the lack of financial support, lack of jogging suits and even lack of a simple ball we could not go to a court and play basketball or football.

At the first time when I came to Turkey, KAOS GL did a favor to us by giving us a court to play football. In that match, the referee was a gay man, Halil Ibrahim Dinçdağ, it was fantastic for us and we had a great time there. We played there. All of our sorrows disappeared in just that day. I want to say to anyone who hear me and people like me that we really like playing sports, it is good for our bodies and souls and everything, I mean sport is an advantage for us to show our bodily powers. And I want to thank you all, my friends from KAOS GL. I hope my voice would be heard to the relevant person who can help and do a favor for us as LGBTIs.

For me, each of us as LGBTIs, can exercise our favorite sport in a simple equipped park in order to make our bodies relaxed but we live here and under these conditions our nutrition is poor and we cannot receive the needed vitamins. We are some LGBTI guys here we collected money and bought a ball to play basketball when gathered together and I hope other guys also back up each other and can have a great day.

Medrik: I'm Medrik, I'm 26 years of old and I'm an Iranian. My basic sport or art is dancing. I had some problems in Iran, that is why I worked in a park. In fact, I encountered with police several times in the park where I was working, and I was beaten by police. We had rented a place for dancing but unfortunately, they prosecuted us under the name of 'providing a place to promote prostitution'. They made a fake legal case for us in order to investigate and put us in jail. This was my art and I came to Turkey for this. Although this, I tried to pursue my art. I went to clubs and similar places in Istanbul as I did not have any financial supporter so I had to find a job in the clubs and they let me perform my art in some places. And fortunately, I could perform.

When you are a dancer or an artist working for a club, particularly when you go to gay clubs, all the staffs have eye on you, they want you and as they want you they let you work there. And if you want to earn money for food you should win their favor so that they like you and want

you and fortunately I tried to cover my expenses by this way but I encountered with problems anyway. My biggest problem was that when I went to my city, as my patrons in the club wanted me more things to do I could not meet it and I was forced to leave the job and also Istanbul to go to my city that is near Istanbul. In there, everyone knew that I was a dancer in a gay club and that is why after working a month in every place they could find out my story and fired me. In a case, one of my home mates beat me and broke my nose because he wanted me to do something that I did not want. In addition, I also tangled with some Turkish guys. I reported all this to the police but they did not take it serious and I applied for changing my city.

Today that I'm in X and playing basketball with other guys is a great and entertaining day for me after 6 or 7 months. We could make a happy time together, although it was not my favorite practice at least we could have a fun. Thank you.

Dayan: Hi, I'm Dayan. I'm a F to M transsexual. I started swimming since I was in primary school. I attended in national tournaments and received prizes but after a while I could not practice with women due to the problems I had and I could not even stick around them because of my appearance being changed. I had a short hairstyle and I was reported always due to that. Then I attended in a diving team and I managed to get a two stars diving certification from Italy but I have never used that certification in my own country and worked professionally. Thank you for letting me explain my troubles here and I hope my voice would be heard and I really thank my friends.

Since I came to Turkey, I have been more interested in sports and I expect that good things happen to me and I can undergo comfortable operations and like others I can pursue my sport professionally and can have my own career progression.





Requiem for a Bird

Draco

*The mother crow looked at her chick
He was small and his wings were weak*

*As the days was passing by, he grew up
But the strong wing doesnt show up*

*The mother knew his son never can fly
So kept the young crow far from the sky*

*Young crow was sad, it wasn't fair
Why he has to be born this way?*

*Saw himself as his mother's pest
So he stood on the ledge of nest*

*Watch out! You have no wings to fly! Mother screams
Son answers: flying to sweet death needs no wings.*

*Fly on
Fly on*

“we also need to become a community and enjoy solidarity. We need to feel that we are not alone in society...”

Interview with Donna

What is it like to be an LGBTI and married with children? Would you like to tell us about it?

I cherish my marriage of a translesbian and a cislesbian couple, but it is hard to say that society feels the same. Society does not accept such a marriage. It is great for my spouse and me, we do not have a problem. My children are ok with the notion of LGBTI, they love us as parents. They do not feel any different from other children about this.

I would recommend LGBTI couples to get married and have children, because we also need to become a community and enjoy solidarity. We need to feel that we are not alone in society, and we certainly need to be a part of society. We need a purpose,

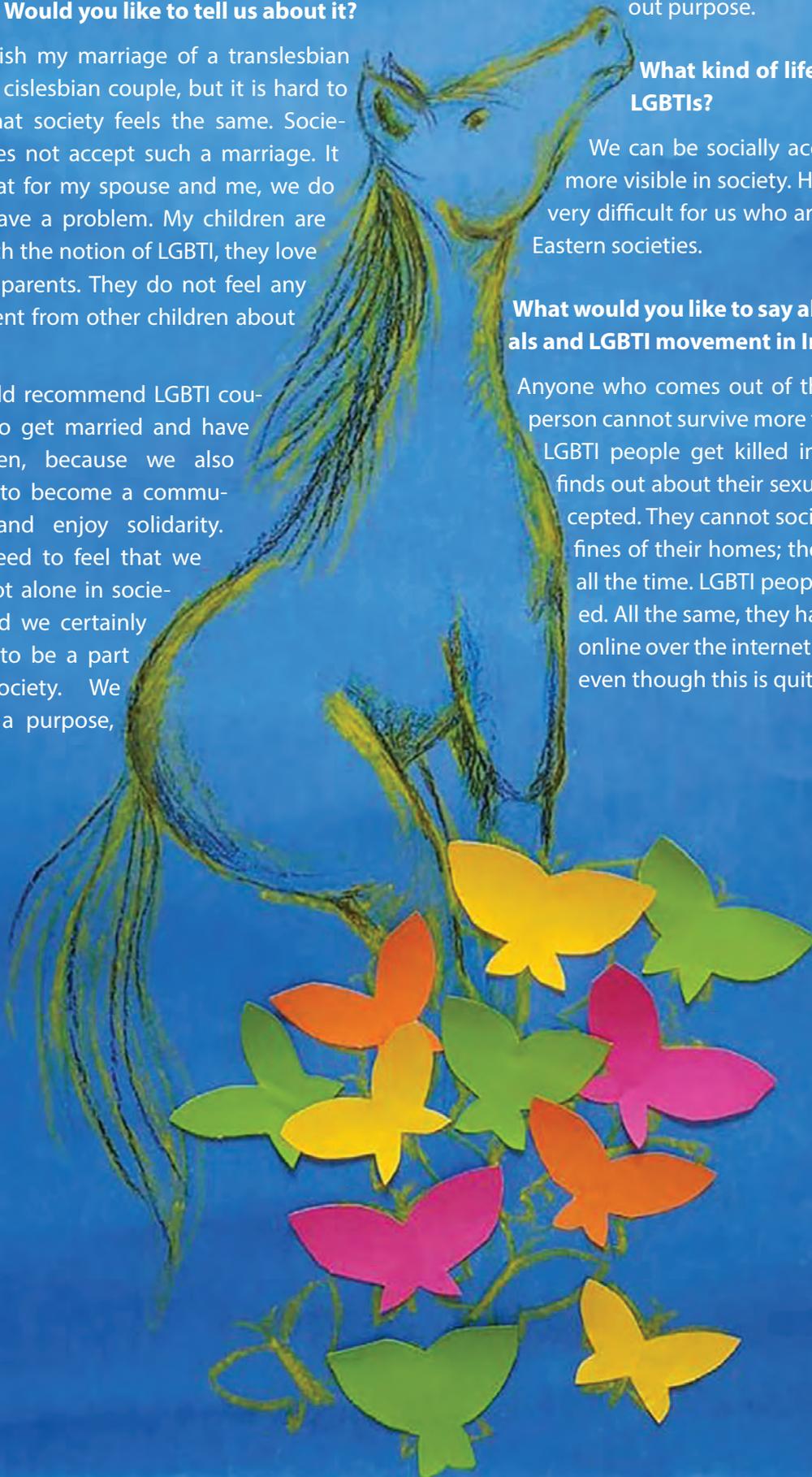
something to hold on to in life. One cannot live without purpose.

What kind of life do you imagine for LGBTIs?

We can be socially accepted if we become more visible in society. Having said that, this is very difficult for us who are living in the Middle Eastern societies.

What would you like to say about LGBTI individuals and LGBTI movement in Iraq?

Anyone who comes out of the closet as an LGBTI person cannot survive more than 3 months in Iraq. LGBTI people get killed immediately if society finds out about their sexuality. They are not accepted. They cannot socialize outside the confines of their homes; they have to stay inside all the time. LGBTI people have to stay closeted. All the same, they have started socializing online over the internet in the last 2-3 months even though this is quite limited.



"I remain accepting myself as I am, for it is a matter of "be or not to be".

Please note: This text may contain triggering material for individuals with a history of abusive relationships.

M. J.

Hello, my story in short is:

I'm 24 years old, a university graduate from Syria.

In X my family knew about my sexual tendencies and I am a gay. I was so scared and I was beaten severely.

After the beating I went out of the house and I was surprised that the police stopped me, they asked for my documents and then they arrested me.

What made me so surprised was that I have been beaten at the prison for one day by an investigator who did not ask me any questions. I was jailed for 14 days.

I met a guy through a gay application, he helped me escape to Turkey and he paid for my escape.

He was renting a house when I arrived in X. He was treating me wonderfully, he was treating me like a friend, a brother, a son and a lover.

We lived the most beautiful 3 months together. After that we decided to move to Germany by sea. But the cost was high, so he moved before me and arrived there.

After a month he sent me an amount of money and I saved some money. I tried to go by sea but I was arrested by Turkish police.

Two months later, I attempted again, but I was arrested by Turkish police.

The third attempt was on X but they arrested me again.

The last attempt was through the Turkish city of X on X but I was arrested again. This time the police officer told me that if I repeat the attempt they will deport me to Syria. I tried to reach the United Nations to make them hear my story, but unfortunately I failed, because I was afraid of going anywhere.

I called my friend in Germany and told him that it is impossible for me to try again, for they will deport me to Syria which means death for me.

I have been rejected by the Syrian society and the Turkish society also rejects gays. I suffered psychological crises, but I overcame them thanks to my friend in Germany who did not give up on me even though our meeting became im-



Serpil Odabaşı • Yurtsuz

possible.

However, I remain accepting myself as I am, for it is a matter of "be or not to be".

My advice to those who read this is to accept people as they are, gays or something else. Because they could be your son, could be your father, could be your friend or brother but they are afraid to admit it. We are educated and mature people some of us are doctors and lawyers. Victory for our case.



Shaya

“But still you call me a foreigner. As though it is not my city. As if I’m still not get used to its weather, water, soil and sun.”

Shaya

I am Shaya. An Iranian trans. I put aside all the prejudices and even my own gender. and I went beyond those.

Now I’m a woman, carrying my dreams in my hands and I’m not fleeing from my griefs. I’m not fleeing from my past and what I was, from my childhood, from all of my fears, from fearing of going to school and the schoolmates who were making fun of me, from my parents’ blames, from a dramatically feeling different from the others. A fear of the days when I was a university student. A fear of the days when I identified myself. A fear of the nights in which I was talking with my family about myself. A fear of being excluded and alone. A fear of the courts and the Legal Medicine Organization. A fear of the operating room and its pain...

A fear of a new life and/or a love affair...

A fear of the culture and prejudices of an ignorant society which never understood me...

A fear of collecting my life in just a suitcase... a fear of saying goodbye. Airport. A foreign country.

I got on the plane and took leave of my homeland. The plane landed in Istanbul Airport. As if Turkey was colder than ever in the winter of that year. My passport got stamped: 08/02/2016. It has been long time since then. I can remember my horror of loneliness and an uncertain destiny in every second.

Now I’m living in a foreign land. I left my homeland as an objection to myself, my family and society and the harshness of life. Now, I can dress and behave like you. I know your language and I can speak it. But still you call me a foreigner. As though it is not my city. As if I’m still not get used to its weather, water, soil and sun. For me, Turkey is full of bittersweet memories. I have lots of friends here who are parts of my life. We made a family of ourselves to protect us from

homelessness. But life here too did not let me be myself and breathe freely.

I’m alone here with myself, my life a limbo that I don’t know to where it finally derives me...

I’ve been working even in harsh time to have a shelter, a roof and a piece of bread...

Working in Turkey is so hard. I’ve never experienced it before. Long and difficult working hours that is sometimes accompanied with the lowest wages as possible. But I did not lose my hope to form a future that was and is my dream.

But life seems as if it does not move on the same rails as a train. Sometimes the train of life tumbles down in a moment...

Due to my lack of work permit I was arrested by Turkish police and my life got caught up. The night when arrested I was transferred to the police station. There were other guys there. The weather was freezing. Time did not pass and morning did not appear. I was thinking that in the morning I will be free but another thing happened.

I was there for three days. In the third day, unbelievably I was told that I am deported from Turkey. As if they just wanted to punish me for living a life. I felt myself innocent and homeless. I remember the first days when I appealed for their aid to protect my future because I did not want it be like my past in Iran, but they were turning against me.

I felt dizzy and the world was orbiting around my head. When my eyes opened, I was in bed in a hospital. The weight of the handcuffs annoyed me. I thought, “Maybe I have killed someone but I am not aware of it!”

When we came back to the police station there were lots of people coming to help me. I knew some of them and I had not seen a lot of them. Among them were my friends, Iranians and

some lawyers. I was just frightened. When getting in the car, I remember a fade image of my friends who were crying and shouting my name. And I was thinking that how much I would miss them. The car was going to the airport and there was just a 'me', my dress and a bag. I was leaving my life alone where I suffered so much to form it.

I was feeling that I have a nightmare. But why I could not wake up? I was crying and begging the officers all over the road...

By the aim of the lawyers and related organizations aware of my case we unbelievably returned from the airport road to the police station. It was unbelievable for me. I did not blink all night long so that not to have a nightmare again.

My friends were out of the police station waiting me at all hours.

A day after I managed to see my lawyer. My mind was at ease somewhat. My lawyer promised that she/he would do her/his best to prevent them from deporting me. At the midnight, however, a car came to the camp for the transport. But I did not expect that they would transport me to Istanbul where was far away and there was nothing there I could do.

No one gave me an answer about where I was being taken to. In that midnight, nobody could do anything and I had to wait for the next day...

We arrived in Istanbul in the morning. A city that I have always been excited to visit it was now horrific to me. Outside of the city, we arrived in a huge building at the seaside. But for me this kind of silence and seclusion was horrifying. I was dumbstruck while shedding tears. What are they going to do with me?

It took 19 days since I entered and got out of there. But I felt that it took several years. I neither knew that what was going to happen nor what they were going to do with me. I had really missed my home, friends and strolling along the streets of my city. But I was there, sitting on my bed for long hours and looking at the sea from behind the windows. I could see the boats emancipated and free. I also had come here to live free. I had come here to fly away from the cage in which I had been captured in for years. Now, I was again captured in another cage.

Fears were not letting my mind set in ease for a moment. My dreams were disturbed. Even now I have its nightmare and my days are filled with tears and anxiety. I saw lots of people with different languages and colors. We were all in the same place. Although we had different sufferings but now we were sympathetic to each other in that prison. What was the new thing that life teaching me? What were the other things that I had not learned them? What should be happened in my life that had not been happened previously? I was griping to my God "why are you treating me like this? Am I expecting too much from life?"

I honestly had missed my mom, dad and sisters. I did not want anybody knows about my state...

I got familiar with nice guys there who helped me a lot. I have learned so much things from anybody who was friendly to me and I did my best to help the others. I had a strangeness in my mind but I had sought to be a patience stone for those there who were believed in me.

Finally, the days past and they set me free to return to my city. I could not believe that I was strolling along the streets, visiting my friends, sitting in my home and taking a deep breath!

But, I did not end up there. It seemed that new problems were appearing. I went to Istanbul to sign several times and when they let me sign in my city the police wanted me to go there each day. From then on, and it has been more than a year that I go every day to the police station to sign. I do not have a job and my life does not go well. My destiny in Turkey is unclear and I do not know when it becomes clear. After Trump came into office all of the refugee files have got stopped and we are all in an agonizing uncertainty. In Turkey, for many people who have come here from their own countries and who have been wanderer the life gets harder day in and day out in any aspect.

I entertain myself by writing and reading. I help people like me and I try to apprise the others of our human rights and right to live as they have and I tell them to consider us as themselves. I'm hopeful about the future. I know what nice days are on the way and I am waiting for those days. I do not want to forget what I have learned during these years. And I want to leave this city and say a goodbye to you with good memories.



Shermin • Let Our Dreams Blossom

“Everyone might be familiar with our barriers as refugees and non-citizens in Turkey. But when the subject is our identities, and LGBTI rights, Not everyone!”

Shermin

I’m an Iranian transgender refugee in Turkey,
30 years old, photographer and painter.

Life in Turkey is far better than my country, but
when it comes to perfection!

Not it isn’t.

Everyone might be familiar with our barriers as
refugees and non-citizens in Turkey.

But when the subject is our identities, and LGBTI
rights,

Not everyone!

Every person has their own story.

Every person has fled different danger,

So, lots of different stories.



Shermin • Giving Birth

But all and all, we are living in a same country which is called Turkey!

We have lots of things in common,

We are Muslims, we have same culture and sometimes same restrictions.

I didn't have high expectations of Turkey than my own country.

So, it is a bit easier to encounter with difficulties in here for me.

I'm not kind of ungrateful person, but when it comes to my rights, it's not bright.

Sometimes I can make some friends,

But the moment I come out, not even exchanging a simple nod in street where our path cross for the next time.

What comes to their minds?

I don't know.

I don't blame them.

I do blame the government and ourselves as well.

Those who are in power but are incapable to make a change.

And we as surrender.

Those who are familiar with our pain,

But still try to remain silent.

And we who cannot find another way to unit and make a change.

Those who banned the Istanbul Pride for years,

And we who tend to hide under the waves.

How do we expect other normal citizens to connect with us when the government disconnect our interaction?

And how we can have our rights passed without any connection and support?

I believe change would not happen if we don't start it from ourselves.

I started making changes when I was in Iran.

Where homosexuality is a crime.

I started painting and depicting my own world and my identity.

I made a collection, and then decided to have an exhibition, after applying for that, no one of gallery owners agreed on that.

My self-portraits with subject (my identity) were serious problem to them.

I didn't give up.

Although as they said: my paintings didn't have Islamic qualifications, I started to have my own online exhibition.

I fought, it was my body and I and I were allowed to decide on that.

After a while, I started photography with homosexuality subjects.

As it was a crime and I couldn't find any nude gay figures to capture, I started getting shots of a friend of mine.

So, I made a photomontage technique collection.

Again, I couldn't get the permission for the exhibition.

And it coincided with my departure to Turkey.

During those horrible days in Iran, I was painting and photographing on the go.

Although they banned my art, but they couldn't

ban my mind.

I found another way to express myself.

I didn't get massive viewers, but it was

enough for me to interact with some people and inform them about LGBTI minorities in Iran.

My message is: we should not surrender to their demands,

We should count on our resistance.

As a woman transgender, everyone might be familiar with our problems everywhere.

Harassment, attack, judgement and threats are familiar words for every of us.

Although these words are horrible words for us, but they can be a subject for my art works too.

Since last year I'm on another project, I decided to take hidden shots of those who harass, attack, judge or fight with transgenders in Turkey to make a documentary photography collection.

Although they find themselves right to do that with our soul or our body, so I can find it right to capture that moment and exhibit it in an artistic way to the world.

I'm not sure if I can have an official exhibition in Turkey, but one day I will have them exhibited in Europe or North America.



Shermin • Identity



Draco

I have found lack of existence of justice in universe when I see he has got 500 m² house and I've rented 50 m² house. His barber costs 30\$ but I'm growing my hair longer not to pay for a barber!

He has special hair cares, many special lotion worth of over 100\$, special yummy foods and special diet! And I? None!

Ok maybe you say he has worked more than me but he has never worked or even none of his family! The problem is, He is a Dog!

Hotel- woman- man- mountainous- garcon- dog- director woman- snow

The woman with shaking teeth turned to the man: "Danny, there is no hope in this blizzard, we cannot see even two meters in front. We will die." Being amazed, Danny pointed at a faded building in the blizzard: "Don't be so pessimist Bet! Look! It seems there is a building over there". The building was not far away. But due to the snow storm it was appeared from 2, 4 meters distanced of a faded road.

They strongly tightened the strap of their backpacks and set off with quick steps and with a new hope. When approached the entrance, Bet partly closed her eyes to see better the upper side of the door: "Ivy Hotel". She happily turned to Danny and shouted out of happiness. Danny was laughing. But with the barking dog who hurled himself behind the door they piped down and then started to laugh at their dread. In just a moment a shadow appeared from the groove under the door and the door opened. Bet and Danny were stared at a lanky, red short-haired man wearing a garcon garb. It was not clear why they stared at him, was it for their happiness or for the wound on the cheek of the man?

Garcon smiled: "in this season just a few people when got lost come to the hotel! Are you lost?" Bet and Danny came in and took a look at the Dobermann on the right side of the man staring and growling at them. Danny laughed: "fortunately you are here, or we're gonna die!" Garcon smiled: "anyway, welcome! Here we have eight free rooms so you can choose as you want. For now, stay warm next to the fireplace and let me bring you a hot coffee". Then the garcon went out from the bottom door of the corridor. "Thanks", Bet said and took out her backpack, putting it next to the fireplace. Danny also did the same: "could you assume that we will drink a hot coffee just a few minutes ago?" Bet answered: "I couldn't even think of our survival!" They laughed together.

The bottom door of the corridor opened: "Robbin?" the dog approached the door and came in. The garcon put the dog bowl down and approached them. Behind him, a middle-aged, red short-haired woman came in while carrying a tray. Garcon said: "this is my sister, Jane, the di-

rector and the owner of this top of the hill hotel!" In front of them, Jane sat down on a red velvet sofa: "welcome, nice to see you, how come did you make it here?" She put the coffee serving tray in front of them on the table. Danny picked up the cup: "actually it has a long story and we are so tired." Jane said: "I see, let's talk about it tomorrow. Here is your room key, a sight to the mountain! But you cannot enjoy it till the storm ceases". She laughed.

The garcon smiled at them and put the empty cups on the tray: "have a good night. You can put your stuffs here till they get dried". Danny and Bet took of their thick quilted jackets and put them down on the sofa arms next to the fireplace. Bet's notice was attracted by snapping dog at the bottom of the corridor. Dog was staring at her. Danny said: "pullovers are dry". Garcon said: "inside the room there are both heater and blanket". Bet avoided looking at the dog and they went upstairs to the room number 35. The room was cold and dark. Danny turned on the light, then approached the heater and enkindled it with a match next to it. He suddenly noticed Bet's worried gaze at the floor: "what happened?" he asked. Bet shacked her head: "nothing, but the dog was bizarre!" Danny nagged: "Please stop it. You see that you were pessimist, were not you?"

Bet took a deep breath: "As if it was warning us!" Danny said: "Cold has frozen your brain. What is this smell?" He smelled. Bet: "I don't know... my head..." she felt dizzy and nausea. The room was orbiting around her head. Danny tried to open the door. He crept to the door while having heavy breathing and sought to take the knob. But his head also fell on the floor so that he could not move anymore. The dog barked behind the door. Danny heard someone was coming upstairs. They would definitely rescue them. The garcon's voice was heard: "alright Robbin, calm down". Danny's eyes could not see anymore, but her ears did hear. The door opened. Jane's voice asked: "What day is today Antwan?" After thinking briefly he answered: "3 or 4th February?" Jane calculated a little: "So till the end of winter we will have enough meat!"



“I told myself a thousand times not to leave... I wanted to back off and break all my promises...”

S. Gh

When I had decided to leave Iran, I was 27 years old. I was graduated and I thought that I would change the world. In the last weeks when I was collecting my staffs I felt like a person who leaves her country forever. In those days, no one of our relatives lived abroad except for my cousin who left the country forever.

I told myself a thousand times not to leave... I wanted to back off and break all my promises...

I will never forget that night, it was the 22nd September 2014 when I was supposed to say goodbye and it was not easy especially when I did not know what was going to happen there. I did not have any idea about Turkey. Saying goodbye to my mom was the most difficult moment. I kissed and smelled her but I did not even know whether we could meet again or not. Everyone was crying, I embraced and kissed them. My mom was the strongest one among them and I really envied her. Later on, I heard that when my mom was ensured that I would never go back she was so restless in?? that she locked my room's door forever. Damn it, the separation!

Once I talked with my mother about myself as a lesbian. Although it was difficult for her to accept this issue she told me “darling, just study and continue your education to become successful, no matter what you are”. Finally, I said goodbye and came here. Now I should tell myself that “S.Gh it is

your choice and you have to be strong.” Istanbul was beautiful. My transit to there was also good. I called my mom and told her that “I will call you later when arrive.” I directly went to Ankara from Istanbul. I clearly remember the moment when arrived there. X, a friend of mine who had come before me was waiting in the airport. I stayed in his home for one or two days.

I had heard bad things about the registration to the UN. I went there with fear and chill to register and then I was supposed to live in X. I was calling my mom every morning and every night. Calling her by phone was so expensive so I was calling her by Viber then X bought her an iPad and we were talking by Skype and I could see her sometimes.

Some years have passed since that night with good and bad, cold and warm, happy and sorrow moments. I became able to embrace my mom again. Now I'm happy that I have come here, I'm happy despite of all rises and falls... my longings are not decreased but I have learned to stand on my own feet, to suffer for making my happy moments and to form my life.

Now, that I'm here I hope to have a spouse and a family, a girl that will be my whole life and I promise to myself that I will support her in any situation to prevent her from having a difficult life as I have experienced.

“Homosexual men are like a prism! Just let them enter to your life and shed light on them then you can see that they make your life full of rainbows...”

Bated Writer

During my wretched life, I have been faced with numerous sufferings from both my friends and the others, but...

The Middle Eastern people are genetically dictator, they just think with their eyes; otherwise whenever someone has accepted me as I am and has given me a chance to be friends he/she has started to love me! I think that homosexual men are like a prism! Just let them enter to your life and shed light on them then you can see that they make your life full of rainbows...! Once, with my only Turkish male friend (I prefer women to be my friends because they usually do not judge me and better understand my feelings)

we went to a cozy coffee bar and I told him in jest that “X I feel cold, can you hug me?”. He knew that I sometimes do joke with him, so he laughed and told me that ‘put on your jacket’. After a minute, he said ‘thank God that I am not a homosexual!’

I felt so sad when he said that sentence and I told him ‘what do you mean by that?’ homosexuality is a kind of gift given only to some people to feel it. Then he said ‘X, what are you driving at? How it can be a gift? I said that I am a perfect man with beard and mustache that shows me older than I am. I’m 19 years old but people say my appearance seems to be 25 years old and more. You know me, I’m softer and more emotional than a girl, with tiny differences! An improved version of a woman and a transformed and more sensitive version of a man! He just laughed and said nothing...

Recently, I have just tried to break the chains that society puts for men and I want to show them that we have more than 2 genders, it is not restricted to male and female!

We are told that men should not cry but I do! Men should not be so emotional but I am! Men should not dye their hair but I did! Men should not use earrings and piercings but I did! Men should not wear makeup but I wore! Men should not like female colors but my

favorite is pink!

A friend of mine, X, once said: “neither I’m a point with the end nor an etcetera that means it continues! I am a colon hanging on air...”

Middle Eastern homosexuals are alike the others who are always depressed and sometimes fall into happiness. We are depressed men who sometimes sink into happiness!

Once, in one of my English-speaking classes I asked my Turkish students that when was the last time they felt unhappy and what was the reason? Everyone answered, then one of the female students who became

my friend too asked me ‘what about you Hocam?’ I was lost in thought, after 10 seconds I said that this question should not be like this for me! You have to actually ask me “do you remember the last time you were happy and what was the reason?”



Aslı Alpar

The only thing in Turkey that makes me calm is a

friend of mine (she) who is so busy that I can just see her or go outside with her once a month but she really loves and respects me. When I spend time with her I totally forget my troubles... just like a tranquillizer! But tranquillizer¹ is not a drug, it solely narcotizes you, when the effect is gone loneliness and pain conquer you again...

As a homosexual, I have suffered a lot from loneliness, desolation and broken heartedness and I believe that religion is our biggest enemy.

Religion makes people pitiless and dogmatic while it should make people softer, kinder, more patient and more conscious...

I wish a day in which religion is destroyed and all people start to believe in humanity and accept the fact that if they cannot distinguish the right from the wrong it is related to the lack of reason and conscious not of the religion.

¹ Tranquillizer is a medicinal drug taken to reduce tension or anxiety.



“I had got out of prison and endured an unrelenting pressure, but I came back to life!”

Interview: Yıldız Tar

“I thought of myself as a living corpse back then. I had just been out of prison and got away from unrelenting pressure. I was not in good shape. She brought me back to life!”

Ramtin Zigorat is a gay Iranian refugee living in Yalova. He got arrested in Iran, suffered from bad treatment and then came to Turkey. We talked about “there and here”, his struggle with Ramtin, who is working to foster LGBTI rights in Iran and Turkey.

He said that they held an event in Iran on 17 May to mark the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia. He was detained while handing out leaflets of the event:

“Horrible things happened there... I was detained, arrested...They kept me in tiny cells. They sometimes got me out of the cell and put me among murderers. They recited Koran and call for prayer right into my ear. I suffered both physical and psychological violence. I could never forget those days. I have managed to somewhat put it behind me with the help of psychological support, but I was still terrified when someone was walking behind me on the street”.

Coming to Turkey after having got away from such pressure, Ramtin has been voluntarily working at several LGBTI+ associations to foster both refugee rights and LGBTI+ rights ever since. So, how did he end up in Turkey?

“When I came to Turkey, I met Zeliş, an LGBTI+ activist who passed away in a traffic accident in 2015. I was lonely and did not know anyone. I was alone when I first came and I had an Iranian friend. I was in Istanbul and felt bad. You get bored when you go to place you do not know anyone around. There was a woman in the subway sitting right in front of me. We were staring at each other. She asked me “are you a fag too?”. I was taken aback. Then I said “yeeees”. She came over and sat next to me. She asked me “where are you from?”. We started chatting. She told me about herself and I told her about me.”

Describing his meeting Zeliş as “his return to life”, Ramtin’s answers to our questions as below:

How was life in Iran? How did you spend your time there?

I have been engaged in activism for 12 years; 8 of which was in Iran. We were organizing activities and meetings to mark the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia on 17 May. We held LGBTI National Day of Iran. Then we changed its name as Pride Week. During these days, we were gathering, sharing our experiences. We invited LGBTI individuals to our activities. We talked about LGBTI rights. We wanted to talk things over and feel that we are not alone. We discussed how to solve problems. We were trying to get together while homosexuality was banned in Iran.

How did you organize these meetings in a country where homosexuality is banned?

I was one of the people who handed out leaflets announcing the meetings. I was passing them out face to face during the day, while everyone else was dropping them somewhere at night. I sometimes engaged in conversations with people. One day, when we left a celebration of 17

May, I wanted to pass out leaflets. There had been plain-clothes policemen around. I must have unknowingly handed out a leaflet to a policeman. Police summoned me and asked me “who are you working for?” I gave them the name of the department at the Ministry of Family and Social Policies, working on transgender people. I said, “They gave me these leaflets, I am paid to hand them out”. They asked me “who gave them to you and when?”. I told them that “I am a transgender myself and that I am doing that to save money for surgery”. They took my home phone number and my address. They told me “wait up, we will call you next day, we have a business with you” and then they let me go.

What happened afterwards?

I felt stressed out. I got on a bus. The same plain-clothes policemen caught up with me while I was getting off the bus. I tried to run away. There was a bazaar. Everyone knew me at that bazaar. I hid under a stall. I took some money from my family that night and left Tehran. They searched for me for a week in Tehran. They went to our home and asked around about me. I asked for help from an activist friend in Canada. I was trying to come to Turkey. While I was on the run, I stayed at my friends’ places but my biggest mistake was to stay at a hotel one night. They followed and found me there. Horrible things happened there... I was detained, arrested... They kept me in tiny cells. They sometimes got me out of the cell and put me among murderers. They recited Koran and call for prayer right into my ear. I suffered both physical and psychological violence. I could never forget those days. I have managed to somewhat put it behind me with the help of psychological support, but I was still terrified when someone was walking behind me on the street.

How did you manage to get away?

I was sentenced to capital punishment. My mother sold out her pieces of land and paid bribes. They changed my file and I got out of the prison. I could not leave home afterwards.

Then my mother passed away. I could never thank her enough for all she did for me. It was a huge thing for me. But I got involved in activism again after her death. Police went after me again and I had to leave for Turkey. I got a flight ticket and left Iran immediately after my photos were shared. My sister was getting married that day. I had to leave the country without seeing her wedding. It was upsetting for both me and my sister.

You came to Turkey. How did it go when you first came to Turkey?

When I came to Turkey, I met Zeliş, an LGBTI+ activist who passed away in a traffic accident in 2015. I was lonely and did not know anyone. I was alone when I first came and I had an Iranian friend. I was in Istanbul and felt bad. You get bored when you go to place you do not know anyone around. There was a woman in the subway sitting right in front of me. We were

staring at each other. She asked me “are you a fat too?”. I was taken aback. Then I said “yeeees”. She came over and sat next to me. She asked me “where are you from?”. We started chatting. She told me about herself and I told her about me. She took me to a pub that day. She introduced me to her lover. It was a very good beginning for me. I thought of myself as a living corpse back then. I had just been out of prison and got away from unrelenting pressure. I was not in good shape. She brought me back to life! She told me about the Pride Week. She invited me to activities. Zeliş gave me her full support... She took me everywhere, introduced me to everyone.

I found out about Lambdaistanbul. I started to join their meetings. Then in 2015, I discovered Hêvî LGBTI and SPOD. I became friends with them all. I participated Hêvî and we came up with the idea of a book. We published a book to tell the problems faced by refugees. It was the



first voluntary work that I did for an association. I voluntarily did the translation of the book. I participated at trainings such as SPOD activism school. I started providing counselling on LGBTI+ counselling line. I found out about Kaos GL and Hayriye Kara. Kaos GL is the first association that worked on Iranian LGBTI refugees. I started to join Kaos GL's activities.

You are living in Yalova now. How is life in Yalova for LGBTI+ refugees?

I am in Yalova now. Unfortunately, we have been assaulted too many times this year. LGBTI refugees are afraid of the police. We see that we have no rights. We hear police saying things like "You came to our country and ruined it". I filed in a lawsuit because four people attacked us two years ago. They drove their car towards us, swearing at us. Then they beat us senseless. I filed in a lawsuit. The judge believed in what the assaulters said. He told us "You must have

done something". I almost turned out to be the offender. They told the story as if we were the ones attacking them and the judge fell for it. I asked them to check CCTV records, but they did not. I had to withdraw my lawsuit in the end saying, "Our noses got broken and all, but I guess it was just a joke". We got health reports but to no avail.

I would not file a lawsuit again if anything were to happen to me. I saw what kind of a justice there is for us. We all keep quiet about minor things anyway. But when important things occur, like when we get attacked, attackers usually threaten us. They say "I will kill you if you go to the police". We have to keep quiet. We keep quiet to be safe. Almost all our friends have been battered, insulted, humiliated or denied accommodation to begin with. But this year we have encountered six attacks in a row. A friend of ours almost got lynched. Our friend filed in a lawsuit.







Please note: This text may contain triggering material for individuals with a history of abusive relationships.

Keven

Hello, My name is Keven. I am 20-year-old. I am a refugee. I've come from Iraq to Turkey.

I came to Turkey fleeing from the circumstances that I was going through and the harassment I had suffered because of my sexual orientation towards boys. Which is known as homosexuality. I love to have relationships with boys and I have no tendencies towards girls. Because of this I have lived a very difficult life in Iraq, where there is lack of personal freedoms and the prevail of fanatical thinking in this country.

At the beginning of the high school, I knew the term homosexuality and I discovered that I had sexual tendencies.

One day me and my cousin X were alone in the room at my house watching television, When I felt him asleep beside me, I felt that I wanted to hug him, I approached and touched him and he exchanged the same feeling with me. The affair started with us when we slept together. I was so happy with this affair and wanted to repeat it with X, but he refused and said that this is wrong, but I loved it.

I began to feel these tendencies at the beginning of my high school. In the second class particularly, I had a relationship with my friend X who was in the same class where I was studying. I lived wonderful days with X, who was the son of the headmaster. We started as friends and he was coming to my house for studying. One day he sat next to me, I extended my hand to his hand, he looked at me and I kissed him. I confessed my admiration to him and he told me that he liked me. So our relationship began and he became the person to whom I was attached. Our relationship lasted for 5 months. X father discovered this affair and he was the principal of the school where I was studying. He summoned me to his office and told me that this was the last year I stay here, the next year you will move to another school and I do not want you to meet X anymore. In the last month I moved out of school and

my relationship with X ended, I no longer met him because of his father.

I moved to another school and the year 2016 was the worst year of my life. All the students were old and punk. The biology teacher's name was X, he harassed me 3 times. The first harassment was in the first lesson of biology. When I entered the lesson he said, in front of all the students, are you a male or a female student, he made all the students laugh at me. In the second time he was playing with my hair. One of the students saw him playing with my hair, he told all the students that X is a gay and teacher X is sleeping with him. He made all the students mock me and do not respect me. In the third class, one day all the students left the class and I was also trying to get out when he told me to come here, when I came he tried to touch my ass, I turned away from him and ran away. I left the school, I stayed at home studying and taking exams at school until I finished high school.

After the high school I met a barber named X, who was working with another barber near my house. We became friends, I suggested that we start a business and he agreed. On September we were preparing to open a shop. In the meantime, I and my mother left the home and we rented a house for myself and her only, because of the problems I suffered with my father, who was beating me for trivial reasons, so we decided to leave the home. On October we opened the shop. After a month I closed the shop due to the problems I had at the time, because of people's harassment and disrespect for me. One day I went to open the shop and found that the glass has been broken, after a week I went and found derogatory writings on the wall of the shop. They called me whore and fagot, They said we don't want you here, you're a disgrace.

On the last night, before I close the shop, I was returning home after I finished my work. A car approached with two people in, a man got off the car and called me, I said yes. He hold my arm and said "what is this

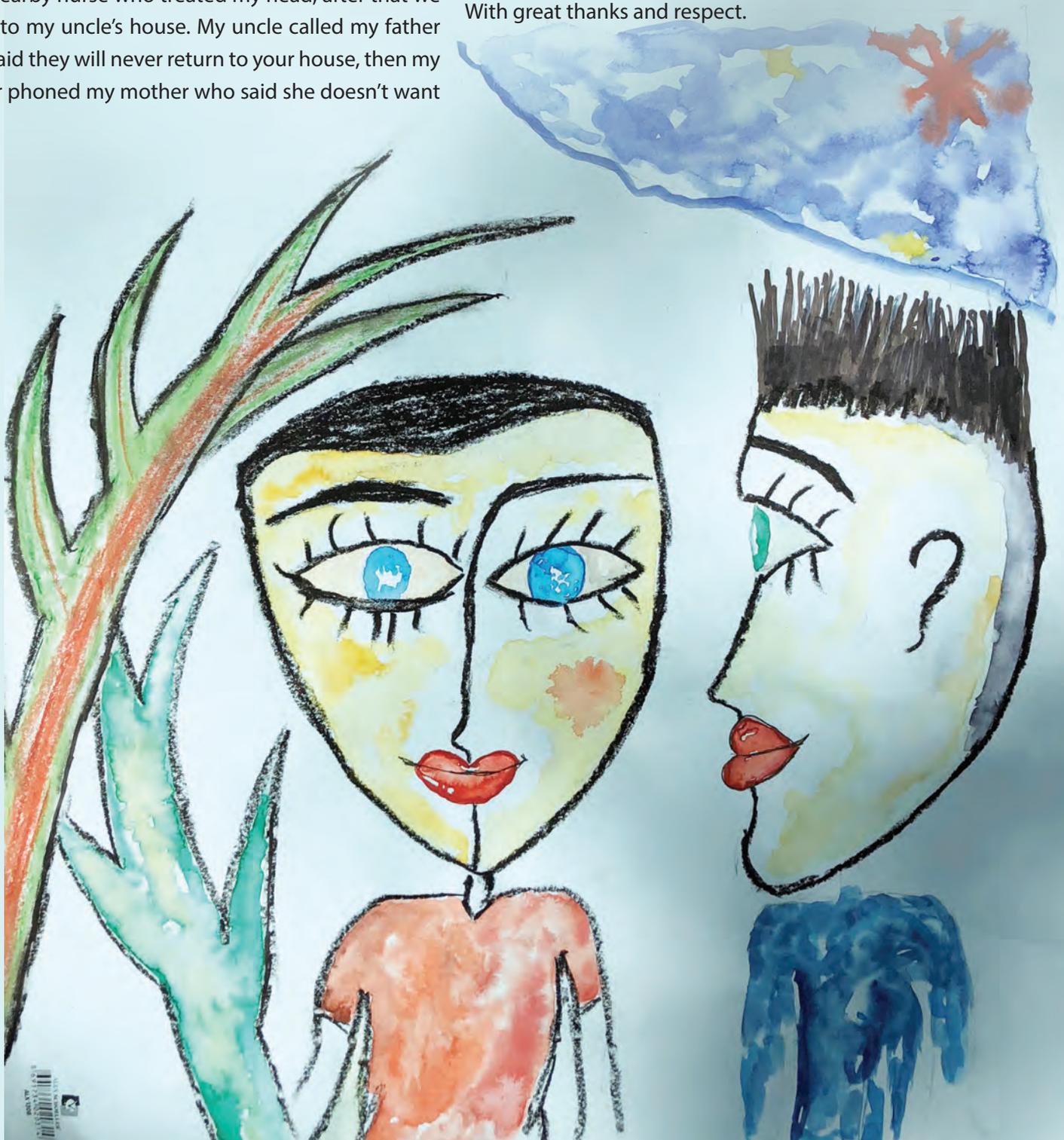
writing on your arm? We do not do this here and whoever does it we cut their hand. You are a disgrace and I don't want to see you here anymore. If I saw you here (and he got out a gun) I will empty it in your head." I ran to my house.

My older sister got married a while after we left the home. My father has tried for 3 times to persuade my mother to back to home, but she did not return, because he was beating me for trivial reasons. The last time he beat me was when he tried to keep me away from X. He was bringing me to account whenever I return home late. At that time he hit me and I fell on the table, my head hit the table and I bled. Then we went to a nearby nurse who treated my head, after that we went to my uncle's house. My uncle called my father and said they will never return to your house, then my father phoned my mother who said she doesn't want

to go back. We stayed for a week at my uncle's house until we found a rented house where we lived in until I left Iraq on November, after my friend X has left the country and I have been threatened by people I don't know.

Currently I live alone in Turkey, in a country where I do not know anything about. I went through difficult circumstances here, for I suffer loneliness, loss and the difficulty of waiting, I don't speak Turkish and I don't know how to deal with people here. My mental state does not allow me to get out of the house. I spent most of my time at home, I do not meet anybody. I live a stranger here.

With great thanks and respect.





“My dream for all LGBTI people is that society will accept us as who we are.”

Interview with A Queen Behind Bars

Would you like to tell us about the LGBTI movement in Iraq?

Being an LGBT in Iraq means suffering from society and family. It also means suffering from oneself. It is because you are not allowed to be who you are in society. That is the life for an LGBTI in Iraq. Recently, LGBTI people from all walks of life, be it engineers, pharmacists or dentists, are planning to leave the country since life in every aspect is very difficult for them. It is because society won't accept them. There are not any opportunities to socialize in Iraq.

What do you suggest for fostering solidarity between Turkish LGBTIs and LGBTI Refugees?

Language is the most important factor that can foster solidarity. If you speak a little Turkish and a little English, you can have a dialogue with LGBTIs in Turkey but both sides need to make an effort. I have also

started socializing with a Turkish LGBTI person. I have suggested that we come together because there is a valuable contribution each LGBTI could make to one another. Showing society that we have a close connection with science and the arts would help create a positive image for LGBTI people.

What kind of world do you imagine for LGBTI people?

My biggest dream is to continue my education. And of course, to be able to live a fulfilling life true to my real emotions and identity; not as someone whom society wants me to be. To be able to live without having to change my words, the way I look and feel. Also, to live in a peaceful environment and country, not somewhere I have to live in fear and under threat. In short, my dream for all LGBTI people is that society will accept us as who we are.

Dreams, Future, Yalova: A few questions, A few answers

This section comprises of the responses of 5 LGBTI+ refugees in Yalova to the following questions. Each color represents the same anonymous author.

What kind of a world do you dream for LGBTI?

- § A safe and peaceful world in which physical and job security persists.
- § A world in which LGBTI people can live freely and can work in high positions, for example, a world in which a Trans can be a president.
- § A world like all other people's with equal rights for all people.
- § There is not a good world to live now.
- § A peaceful, unprejudiced and colorful world like our flag.

Where do you want to live and what do you want to do in the future?

- § In Canada- I want to study.
- § In the future, I want to be in the USA because it is the land of opportunities and I also want to progress in my profession what is shoe designing.
- § I will pursue my profession that is make-up artist and I want to study in high-level schools and progress.
- § I want to be a successful person in my own field of study.
- § I want to be a lawyer or a socio-political activist.

Do you want to tell us about your dreams?

- § I want to be a fashion designer and to have my own fashion shows.
- § My dreams are about living freely, dressing the way I like and having lots of friends.
- § I want to write a book about make-up and also to make my own make-up brand and to progress in my profession.
- § My dream is about forming a free world for all people with their colored differences.
- § My dream is to become a well-known activist or a lawyer.

What are the pros and cons of being a LGBTI refugee in Yalova?

- § Job conditions are very bad. People of Yalova do not have a positive attitude towards LGBT and transsexuals.
- § Problems: Insecurity, unemployment, pennilessness, depression and loneliness.
- § The disadvantage is unemployment and the advantage is that we are near to Istanbul.
- § The lack of facilities and not having educational conditions.
- § Unemployment is a big deal. The only advantage is being near to Istanbul.

What is your relationship with LGBTI people in Turkey? What do you think about the possibility of a solidarity between Turkish and refuge LGBTIs?

- § I cannot make a relationship with them because I cannot trust them.
- § My profession in Iran was shoe designing and I used to play Ping-Pong; well it is enjoyable to do what you like to do. My friend, it is better to do whatever you like and enjoy.
- § I studied make-up and really like it. I think make-up should be inherent to you and you have to really like it and you

should attend different courses; you have to try so hard for the sake of this art and also update your work.

- § In Iran, I was a journalist and I really liked it.
- § I worked in a fashion and textile house. I was happier than I am since fashion was my only dream.

Did you have a profession, art or sport enjoying from it in Iran? What did you feel when dealing with that? What do you have to say to those who want to start those kinds of staffs?

- § I do not have any relationship with LGBTIs in Turkey, I just know organizations such as KAOS and SPOD. I think these organizations can make a solidarity among LGBTIs.
- § As a make-up artist I have a good relation with them and I go to their homes for work. I think when you do not have a profession or an art you do not want to see the success of the others who have them and that is why you cannot make a good relationship with each other.
- § The possibility of a solidarity exists but unfortunately, there is not a good relationship between Turkish and Iranian.
- § We have a telepathy problem among ourselves. They do not know about what we have been going through.

What can you tell us about the LGBTI Movement in Iran?

- § LGBT movement in Iran is a support for those who live there, by this movement LGBT people in Iran can enjoy a social support as it is in Turkey, but unfortunately in Iran there are many constraints on it.
- § I have no idea.
- § In Iran the movement is a toddler without any party, organization and coherent group.
- § In Iran to be a woman, a girl, a scientist or successful is a CRIME! Now you think what is the meaning of being LGBTI. Thank you for not leaving us alone.



Frequently Asked Questions about Sexual Health

In the preparation of this text, the presentation of Fidan Şenova was benefited.

What is Sexual and Reproductive Health?

- Normal functioning of reproductive organs
- A healthy and happy sexual life
- Being able to live sexuality and reproductivity without constraints
- Being able to decide whether or not to have a child or when to have a child and how many children to have
- To be able to have healthy children born as a result of planned pregnancies by implementing this decision

- Being able to be protected from the factors of sexually transmitted infection and being able to access treatment when needed

- Sexual and Reproductive Health is a physically, emotionally and socially complete wellness situation and it is a fundamental right for all people regardless of being woman, man, young or old.

What are the Sexual and Reproductive Health Problems?

- Sexually transmitted infections:

For example: HIV, HPV, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, Gonorrhea, Chlamydia

- Physiologic and physiological problems that

prevent to have sexual intercourse or to get sexual pleasure

For example: Anorgasmia, erectile dysfunction, painful sexual intercourse, vaginismus.

- Other health problems affecting genital organs and reproductive organs

For example: Breast cancer, testicular cancer, prostate cancer.

What is Intersex?

Intersex individuals are the people with variations of sex characteristic (chromosomes, genital and/or reproductive organs) which do not fit the gender binary female or male definitions of Medicine. Intersex is not a fixable definition, it is a general term used to define a spectrum. The doctors often advice parents that surgical and other medical interventions should be carried out on intersex children and by this way the children's bodies should have apparently "female" or "male" characteristics. In many cases these medical interventions are unnecessary and to put intersex people into boxes cosmetically. As intersex children grow older these interventions may have negative impacts on them. The concept of "intersex" refers to a sexual characteristics spectrum which naturally exists in humans. In additions, intersex indicates the physical fact that sex is a spectrum and humans can exist with various sex characteristics other than female or male. A person's being intersex may become apparent at later stages in life (in some cases the characteristics may be detected right after birth, sometimes in childhood and sometimes in puberty or adulthood). Depending on the circumstances they live in intersex people may find out their being intersex at different times in life. In cases that being intersex is a taboo, people realize themselves at a later stage. Even some intersex people may never know that they are intersex. Due to the surgeries which carried out right after births there are many people who do not know that they are intersex.

Sexually Transmitted Infections:

• What is HIV? How Is It Transmitted?

It is transmitted through blood and sexual activity.

There is no transmission in the womb, however if an HIV+ woman has a vaginal delivery the child may be HIV+ too. Therefore, the woman should have caesarean delivery. There may be a transmission through breastfeeding, the child should not be breastfeed. HIV can be transmitted through unprotected anal and vaginal sex. It is not transmitted by oral sex but there are other diseases which can be transmitted by oral sex. You can be protected 99% by using condoms. When a person is infected with HIV+, this person may not show any physical symptom for years. Therefore, a test should be taken after a risky intercourse. If you take the test at least 3 weeks after the sexual intercourse, you have accurate results. HIV is not transmitted through toothbrush or comb.

HIV and AIDS are different things. AIDS is the name of the situation which occurs if HIV+ people do not get the treatment and therefore their immune system significantly weakens. The person may live for years without showing any symptoms. Today, administration of the treatment has become much easier. Even if you are HIV+, you can continue with your life without facing with any problem by taking one or two medicines on a day.

• What is HEPATITIS and How Is It Transmitted?

There are 5 types of Hepatitis, however three of them are sexually transmitted.

Hepatitis B virus is transmitted by sex, blood and blood products. Moreover, the virus may be found in the Hepatitis B patient's body fluids (saliva, urine etc.). For the virus to be transmitted, the fluid (blood or other body fluids) including virus must contact with an open wound on the person's body. The disease is not transmitted

orally, namely it is not transmitted by taking transmitted materials (food, drink) through the mouth. If same needle is shared with some people, the infection can be transmitted from person to person. If a person gets blood or blood product transfusion for any reason and if this blood includes the virus, transmission is inevitable. Therefore, today the blood prepared for transfusions is carefully tested. Furthermore, Hepatitis B can be transmitted sexually. As it is the case for all sexually transmitted disease, to be protected from hepatitis, preservatives/condoms should be used during sexual intercourse. There is a risk of transmission through tattooing, manicure, pedicure, surgical or teeth operations, acupuncture, if the devices used are not renewed for each operation. Sharing toothbrush and blade which are likely to be contaminated with blood may also impose danger. Transmission from an infected mother to child may occur during delivery. Hepatitis B is not transmitted through daily activities during a school and work day.

Hepatitis B vaccine is available and being vaccinated is compulsory in Turkey. Hepatitis B vaccine is scheduled as 3-dose. If you are an adult and not vaccinated before, you can go to Community Health Centers and state hospitals only with your ID card and be vaccinated free of charge. Refugees can enjoy this right, too.

Hepatitis C is transmitted by blood and sexual contact. There is no vaccine for Hepatitis C ,however, there is a treatment with medications. Both types of Hepatitis damage liver. If a person does not get treatment in acute stage, the disease enhances and damages liver.

- **What is HPV (Human Papilloma Virus)?**

There are many types of HPV. Some of them lead to cancer and some other lead to warts. Its transmission is easier than other sexually transmitted infections. Skin-to-skin contact can be enough for transmission. It can be transmitted

by contact with hand and by shared sex toys. The best way to be protected is being vaccinated. HPV vaccine is not under coverage of social security in Turkey. HPV vaccine is advised especially for the people with wombs. Nevertheless, anal cancer may occur in the people without wombs. The people with penis may be asymptomatic carriers and may transmit the virus to other people.

HPV is the most important risk factor known in cervical cancer. HPV is the most common sexually transmitted virus. Even though, the external genital warts caused by HPV can often be noticed as swellings, some of them may be too small to notice. The symptoms can be seen as mild itching , occasional pain, burning and stinging pain, bleeding during or after sexual intercourse, irregular bleedings between menstrual periods and persistent vaginal discharge. For diagnosis, gynaecological examination and smear test are very important.

- **Herpes (HSV)**

It can appear on mouth and genital area. Once it is transmitted to the body it remains in the body during the whole life. It occurs when the person is under stress or when the immune system weakens. Transmission takes place only when there are active lesions. It can be transmitted from genital organs to mouth and vice versa. The symptoms are itching and swelling. When the symptoms are started to be felt, you can prevent herpes by using cream before it becomes apparent.

The Points To Be Paid Attention To Be Protected From Sexually Transmitted Diseases:

- Wearing cotton underwear
- While cleaning genital organs, chemical medicines and cleaners should not be used, they should be cleaned only with water.

- Being careful for not irritating genital area
- If there is a smelly or non-smelly discharge from genital organs and the colour of discharge is different than usual you may have an infection, you should visit your doctor.

Ways of Protecting Oneself from Sexually Transmitted Diseases:

Condom: There are penis and vagina condoms as two types. Vagina condoms are more effective than penis condoms in protection from HPV. If condom breaks, there exist risks of transmission and pregnancy. Lubricant on the condom is not harmful. It is advised to use condoms during oral sex, too. Because the infection can be transmitted from mouth to genitals and vice versa. If you are monogamous and you have gotten the test you can have sexual intercourse without protection. Of course this is safe only for preventing the transmission of infection, to avoid pregnancy you should use different methods. Even if you have one partner, before having sexual intercourse without protection it is important that you take the test. If you will have a group sex, a different condom has to be used for each of the partners.

Glove: It is advised to use before touching genital area. It is misleading to think that the disease is not transmitted to lesbians and bisexual women. HPV and HSV can be carried and transmitted through contact with hand.

Dental Dam: Dental Dam can be used if the partners will have oral sex. Penis condoms may be transformed to dental dam. Firstly by cutting tip of condom and then cutting it through long side you can make a dental dam. By putting it on vaginal lips /labia you can have oral sex through it.

Breast (Self) Examination: To detect breast cancer earlier, this examination needs to be done monthly. Trans women must also do it because as the person takes oestrogen breasts

start to grow. For examination you should remove your wearing completely.

To do the Breast Self-Examination:

Stand in front of a mirror and look at yourself. Check whether there is a wrap or not. One of your breasts may be larger than the other, but emergence of an extreme size difference between them is dangerous. You need to check whether there is an asymmetry on your breast by putting your hand on your waist and by bending down and by raising your hands. Then lie down, place your hand under your head and to make your breast to lie on your chest put a pillow or towel behind your shoulder and then check your all breast tissue starting from your armpit by moving your three fingers in circles or moving them in a vertical pattern. You should see your doctor if you feel a lump or thicker tissue and if this tissue hurts when you touch it; if there is a nipple discharge; if there is a dimple in the breast or a wound on it, if there is a noticeable increase in size of the breast; if breast skin has a orange-peel-textured appearance, if there is a swelling on your armpit. Pay attention to make the examination on the same day in each month.

Testicular (Self) Examination

Testicular examination needs to be done at least once in a month to detect testicular and prostate cancer earlier. It is better to do it after a warm shower. The examination should be performed while standing and with two hands. When you take your testicle at your hand, you need to roll it with your both hands. You should check whether or not there is a lump, if there is a lump, you should detect whether it is painful or not and you should check whether one testicle is larger than the other. If there is an abnormality, the person must consult with the doctor.



Frequently Asked Questions About Gender Re-Assignment Process for Transgender People

In the preparation of this text, the presentations of Deniz Zenan Şapka and Fidan Şenova were benefited.

What are the Problems Faced with Regarding Transgender People's Sexual and Reproductive Health?

- Lack of provision of adequate information on body construction surgeries
- Lack of adequate information about side effects of hormone taking process. For example, oestrogen can be dangerous. In hormone usage without doctor supervision the dose which the person needs cannot be adjusted and by this way side effects increase.
- Sexual dysfunctions: not being able to have

sexual intercourse in a way the person likes with newly created organs is among the problems transgender people are faced with. Moreover, the other problems may be incompatibility of reconstructed penis for trans men, vaginal infections, disliking neo genitals, vaginal dryness, lack of information about neo vaginal care and usage, and lack of adequate knowledge about the care and healing process after mammoplasty.

How is Transition Process for Trans People Carried out in Turkey?

There is a two-fold process as legal and medical. In Turkish Law, gender change is regulated by 40th article of Civil Code.

Legal Process

“Petition for Change of Gender” and “Petition for Change of Name” are needed to be prepared separately or as one petition in accordance with the person’s request, to open lawsuits for change of gender and change of name. People may request to change their surname because of the circumstances of their life.

How to Open a Lawsuit for Change of Gender?

Following preparing the lawsuit petition, the person has to go to distributing Office in the courthouse with two copies of the petition, medical reports issued in medical process or the decisions, if they exist and with the residence address and has to submit the request for opening a lawsuit.

For non-citizens, this case should be brought against the Provincial Directorate of Migration Management. Since it is something recent that transgender refugees apply to the court for this, the requests are rejected by some courts. However, gender re-assignment process and the legal recognition of transgender people are covered by the right to respect for private life, which is guaranteed by the constitution and is a fundamental right. According to the Constitution and laws, refugees cannot be excluded from this scope.

There may be problems in practice in the legal and medical process. Therefore, it is recommended that persons who want to start this process to communicate with associations and organizations in Turkey and receive information about the required steps.

How Long Does Court Process Take?

Conclusion of the law suit usually takes one year including workload of the courts and duration of the correspondences between state organizations (collecting documents and reports) if there is not something missing in the reports required. After changing identity the person should correct the name and gender in the official documents by presenting the court decision and the identity.

What are the Hospital Departments to be visited in the medical process?

- Psychiatry
- Gynaecology
- Endocrinology
- Genetic Department
- Urology
- Plastic Surgery

After completing all the tests and general procedures the person continues with the psychiatric process for a certain time. The person can start to take hormones in 6 months or one year with board decisions (if there is a board in the hospitals) or with doctor’s permission.

What are the issues to pay attention in hormone taking process?

Hormone follow ups are carried out by Endocrinology departments in the hospitals.

The aim of hormone use is to suppress biological sex hormones and to take cross-sex hormones. Even though the process of hormone taking ends, the physicians request follow ups once on average in three months and later they request them once in six months or once in a year together with general blood count.

In spite of the fact that hormones provide the person with desired characteristics it is a possible risk that some complications that would bring hardships regarding the person’s health may occur.

The effects of hormones after starting to take them change from person to person. Their effects may start to occur between in 3 months and one year.

What are possible physical effects of testosterone and oestrogen on the body?

- Increased growth of body and facial hair/
Weakened body and facial hair
- Increased/decreased muscle mass
- Thickening of the skin/thinning of the skin
- Hair loss
- Pustulation
- Voice starts to deepen

- Gynecoid type weight gain (to buttocks/hips)
- Changes in the person's psychological state
- Increased/decreased sex drive

What are the issues to pay attention during hormone use?

Observable changes in the person's body take place during hormone taking process. This should be considered just as entering puberty once more.

You should be paying attention to your eating habits.

Because of the fact that too much salt may lead to high blood pressure and other diseases together with it, the person needs to refrain from salty foods and smoking and alcohol use.

What to be known regarding the Gender Re-Assignment Surgeries for Trans People?

Gender re-assignment surgeries for Trans people are under social security cover-

age and for having surgery health committee report stating that surgery is "...Psychiatrically necessary" and court decision stating 'it is permitted to have surgery' are required. These surgeries include infertility surgery, mastectomy, creation of penis and vagina. Social Security Institution has been requiring at least one year long psychiatric process since last year.

What are names of the surgeries which trans men and women have?

- Hysterectomy (removal of uterus and ovaries for infertility),
- Mastectomy (removal of breasts)
- Penis creation/penis reconstruction
- Breast augmentation/mammoplasty/breast reconstruction
 - Vaginoplasty/vagina creation surgery
 - Removal of Adam's apple (upon the person's request)
 - Plastic surgeries upon person's request: removal of unwanted hair, nose, cheekbone and chin surgeries





Frequently Asked Questions on Legal Rights

Legal Rights

1. What is the asylum policy of Turkey?

Turkey is signatory to the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and 1967 New York Protocol. Turkey retains a “geographical limitation” to its ratification of the Protocol, which allows the Parties to opt for such limitation. Turkey defines the International Protection statuses according to this geographical limitation.

Under the law, Turkey specifies three separate international protection status as follows: refugee, conditional refugee and subsidiary protection.

Asylum seeking applicants from member states of the Council of Europe are granted “refugee” status; whereas those from non-member states of the Council of Europe are given “conditional refugee” status.

Refugee, conditional refugee and subsidiary protection definitions are defined in Articles 61, 62 and 63 of the Law on Foreigners and International Protection (LFIP), respectively.

As opposed to “refugees”, conditional refugees are allowed to stay in Turkey only until they are resettled in a third country. Protection is only temporary since the asylum system in Turkey does not allow for applicants to eventually obtain a permanent status.

Directorate General of Migration Management;

- Applications to the Directorate General of Migration Management are made via Provincial Directorates of Migration Management.
- Provincial Directorates of Migration Management conduct interviews with applicants: one at the time of application and another afterwards to determine whether applicants

qualify for the status of refugee or conditional refugee or subsidiary protection.

- Provincial Directorates of Migration Management are responsible for all procedures concerning applicants' stay in and exit from Turkey as well as their entitlement to international protection.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees;

- UNHCR is responsible for resettlement procedures in a third country.
- Resettlement process is quite long due to the large amount of applications and the quotas of third countries.

2. How does International Protection Application Work?

The Government of Turkey is the principal provider of protection in Turkey. Registration with the Turkish authorities is therefore the most important way of securing your rights in Turkey. Registration is an important obligation for foreigners in Turkey as it forms the legal basis for your stay in Turkey and allows you to access to public services. Registration protects you against forced return to your country.

On the basis of the Law on Foreigners and International Protection, you are obliged to apply to the Provincial Directorates of Migration Management (PDMM) individually to be registered under the provision of international protection procedures.

PDMM's procedure will determine whether or not you qualify for international protection under the Law on Foreigners and International Protection and the 1951 Refugee Convention.

Following your registration with PDMM, an International Protection Applicant ID (IPAID) will be issued for you and your family members; you will be legally staying in Turkey with your ID document. When you receive your ID document, an individual foreigner's ID number (99 xxxxxx), will be granted to you and your family members. This ID number grants you and each of your family members the access to a set of rights and services in Turkey.¹

The Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM), as the national authority en-

trusted by the Law on Foreigners and International Protection, is responsible for registering and processing international protection applications. UNHCR has provided support to DGMM during its formation process, including registration of international protection applicants and referral processes. As of 10 September 2018, UNHCR stopped registering foreigners wishing to apply for international protection in Turkey.

Pursuant to the Law on Foreigners and International Protection, foreigners who would like to apply for international protection in Turkey shall approach the Provincial Directorates of Migration Management (PDMM) in the cities upon entry to the country. PDMMs will initiate and undertake registration and further processing of the international protection applications lodged by individuals.

UNHCR will continue its protection activities, including delivery of counselling services, to refugees and asylum-seekers in Turkey. If you have protection needs or are in need of counselling about the procedures or about your rights and obligations in Turkey, you can approach UNHCR and its partner organizations. UNHCR will continue to have access to international protection applicants and, subject to the consent of the applicant, to the information concerning the international protection application lodged by the individual.

In this context:

1) International protection applicants who are already registered and referred to cities by UNHCR:

- You need to approach the PDMM to apply for international protection, as mentioned in the referral letter given to you by UNHCR.
- UNHCR and its partners will continue to provide protection services, including counselling, to international protection applicants or status holders in Turkey. If you have protection needs, or are in need of counselling, you can approach UNHCR and its partner organizations.
- UNHCR will continue to have access to international protection applicants and, subject to the consent of the applicant, to the information concerning the international protection application lodged by the individual.

2) Persons who have recently arrived in Tur-

¹ Source: <http://help.unhcr.org/turkey/tr/information-for-non-syrians/reception-and-registration-with-the-turkish-authorities/>

key and who have not yet been registered by PDMM:

- Please approach the PDMM upon your arrival in Turkey and apply for registration as soon as possible.
- There is no need to obtain a referral letter from UNHCR in Ankara in order to lodge your application for international protection at the PDMM. You can approach the PDMM at your location.
- Having your registration completed with the PDMM will legalize your stay in Turkey. You will be issued an ID card with a Foreigners' ID number, which will give you access to the rights and services as per the Turkish legislation.
- International protection applications are received by 81 provinces while permanent stay in some cities are not allowed under the legislation. If you apply to one of the provinces where residence is not allowed, you will be referred to a province where longer-term residence is regulated.
- PDMM and the protection desks will identify your protection needs and vulnerabilities. If you have any special needs, please inform the interviewer at the PDMM. Based on an assessment, your application may be prioritized.
- UNHCR and its partners will continue to provide protection services, including counselling, to international protection applicants or status holders in Turkey. If you have protection needs or are in need of counselling, you can approach UNHCR and its partner organizations.
- UNHCR will continue to have access to international protection applicants and, subject to the consent of the applicant, to the information concerning the international protection application lodged by the individual.

Please contact DGMM and UNHCR on below hotlines if you need more information about your application to Turkish authorities:

- 157-YİMER (DGMM Call Center for Foreigners)
444 48 68 – UNHCR Counselling Hotline²

What you need to know about asylum applications:

There is not a deadline to apply for asylum after you enter Turkey, however, you are expected to make an application as soon as possible.

If you entered Turkey through irregular means or if your visa has expired, your stay in Turkey becomes legal as soon as you apply for International protection and if you left your country on grounds of war or threat of persecution, you will not be repatriated until your application process is completed.

By applying to the governorates for international protection, you will not be subjected to criminal action for irregular (illegal) entry into Turkey or irregular (illegal) stay in Turkey, provided that you give a justified reason for your irregular entry or presence.

Your first meeting at the relevant Provincial Directorate of Migration Management does not constitute as an interview, it is for registration purposes. You will be asked about your reason to leave your country at this meeting.

You will be asked to present your identity and/or travel documents to verify your identity information at the time of registration.

Your statement at the time of identity verification holds true and unless you do not want to provide the required documents and information, your application may be considered withdrawn and you may face the risk of deportation.

At the time of this first registration, you will be asked to state your reasons to leave your country, your experiences after you have left your country and whether you have previously benefited from protection in another country.

During the registration process, the Provincial Directorate of Migration Management is required to give you a document valid for 30 days, indicating that an application has been made. This document is not charged. At the time of registration, the Provincial Directorate of Migration Management should let you know of the date and venue of the interview where your status as a refugee or conditional refugee will be determined. However, due to the large amount of applications, this information may not become available at the first meeting.

Your stay in Turkey becomes legal as a result of your application at the Provincial Directorate of Migration Management.

² Source: <http://help.unhcr.org/turkey/tr/information-for-non-syrians/reception-registration-and-rsd-with-unhcr/>

3. What is a satellite city? Can I pick any city I like during registration?

By law, Turkey uses the practice of “satellite cities” as part of its asylum system. In other words, asylum seekers do not have the right to choose their cities of residence. The final decision on your city of registry is taken in coordination with the Provincial Directorate of Migration Management, in view of the current refugee/conditional refugee population registered at satellite cities. It is important to state whether you have a health condition that requires constant treatment or whether a family member is already registered at a satellite city in Turkey since it plays a role in determining to which city you will be assigned.

According to the practice of “satellite cities”, you have to reside in the city where you are registered, and you are not allowed to leave it without permission. It is difficult to change your satellite city. Ankara, İstanbul and İzmir are not among satellite cities.

4. What are your obligations after registration?

Your stay in Turkey becomes legal after your registration at the Provincial Directorate of Migration Management. However, there are some obligations to fulfil following the registration.

According to residence obligation, you have to obtain written permission from the Provincial Directorate of Migration each time you leave the city where you are registered.

According to signature duty, you may be asked to check-in regularly and report to the Provincial Directorate of Migration Management for signature duty in order to prove that you have not left the city.

You have to provide correct identification to authorities (including passport information).

If you fail to fulfill your signature duty 3 times without any excuse, if you do not go to the city you are referred to after registration or, if you leave the satellite city without permission, your application is considered withdrawn, your application process is halted, and you may face deportation.

5. How does the interview with the Provincial Directorate of Migration work?

Under the law, the date of the interview should

be set at the time of registration and it should take place within 30 days. However, this may take longer in practice.

You absolutely have to be present at the appointment as it is the most important stage of your application. The decision on your stay in Turkey and on your application for international protection depends on how this interview goes. Your failure to show up at the interview may be regarded as a withdrawal of application!

Interpretation will be available during the interview, this is your right. You may also request to have interpretation during the registration.

Your legal representative/lawyer may accompany you at the interview upon your request.

During the interview, you will be asked about your reasons to come to Turkey and the risks you face if you return to your country; you will have the opportunity to share your documentation. The purpose of the interview is to determine whether you qualify for international protection.

The risk of persecution in the event of your return to your country will be assessed based on five criteria set out in the 1951 Refugee Convention. Therefore, the internal and external consistency of your story and facts are very important.

Your application should be determined and responded within six months at the latest. The result of your application will be delivered to you in written notification and with justification. The notification is sent to your address of residence. In cases where there is not a registered address for an applicant, the notification is handed to the “Muhtar” (local headman).

If your interview is successful, you will have either the status of conditional refugee or subsidiary protection, available as international protection status.

As a conditional refugee, you can lawfully stay in Turkey until you are resettled in a third country.

When your application to the international protection is refused, you can appeal to the court within 30 days after the notification of the decision. It is very important to appeal within the deadline. Appeals made after the deadline are rejected. Therefore, apply to a non-governmental organization where you can get legal support immediately.

Who can be deported?

- People who pose a threat to public order/ security/health
- People who overstay their visa, whose visa exemption is expired by more than 10 days or whose visas are cancelled.
- People whose residence permits are cancelled
- People who work without work permit
- People who violate the provisions of legal entry to and legal exit from Turkey
- People who enter Turkey despite a ban on entry
- Executors, members supporters of terrorist organizations and benefit-oriented criminal organizations
- People who use untrue information and false documents during arrival in Turkey and during transactions made for visas and residence permits.
- People who make a living from non-legitimate ways of livelihood
- After the final decision issued for those people whose application for international protection is rejected; whose application held in excluded from international protection; whose application are considered as unacceptable; who withdraw their application; whose application is withdrawn; whose international protection status is ended or cancelled; who do not have the right to stay in Turkey by the other provisions of this Law.
- Those considered to be related to terrorist organizations identified by international institutions and organizations.

According to the Law on Foreigners and International Protection, no one can be deported to a country where s/he/they will be subjected to torture, inhuman or degrading punishment or treatment or where her/his/their life or liberty will be threatened on grounds of her/his/their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political ideas.

You can appeal to the court within 7 days from being notified against the deportation order issued against you. It is very important to appeal on time, appeal made after the deadline is rejected. For this reason, as soon as the the decision is communicated to you, contact a

non-governmental organization where you can get legal support immediately.

6. When does an application considered withdrawn?

After your application for an international protection, your process will be halted and you may face deportation:

- If you state in writing that you have withdrawn your application
- If you leave the satellite city where you are registered without permission
- If you fail to show up for signature duty 3 times without any excuse
- If you fail to show up at the interview 3 times without any excuse
- If you object to provide your identity information during registration.

You can appeal to the court within 30 days from being notified against the withdrawal order issued against you. It is very important to appeal on time, appeal made after the deadline is rejected. For this reason, as soon as the decision is communicated to you, contact a non-governmental organization where you can get legal support immediately.

You are allowed to stay in Turkey until your application for appeal is issued. It is very important to appeal on time so as not to face loss of a right.

It is legally mandatory to tell you what the decision is and how to appeal it, in the language you will understand when notifying you of the decisions made by public institutions. In addition, you must be told in the language that you will understand what is written in the documents given to you to sign in any government agency (Police Station, Provincial Directorate of Migration Management, Deportation Center etc.) and you do not have to sign the document you do not want to sign. However, if you have to sign, you may write in your own language that "I have to sign the document though I do not want to"; or if you are not explained what is written in the documents given to you to sign in a language you understand, you may write "I do not know what I sign, I was not explained". Those notes will be vital for proving in the court.

When the above-mentioned decisions are notified to you, you can refrain from signing again.

However, deadlines begin on the date the decisions are made to you, even if you refrain from signing.

You have the right to request a lawyer in all of the above situations. You can annotate that “I have requested a lawyer” on the document you are asked to sign.

Right to Health:

Your health insurance plan (SGK-Social Security Institution) becomes effective once your identity document is drawn up. You may get health care services at health care centers, family planning centers, state hospitals and university hospitals. However, you cannot directly apply at “application and research centers” at university hospitals or “private hospitals”. You have to get a referral to approach to these latter institutions. You will have a right of priority access to services if you are identified in the system as a person with special needs, due to exposure to torture, sexual assault or other grave psychological, physical or sexual violence.

With the recent amendment made in the Law on Foreigners and International Protection, your insurance will be valid for a period of one year from the date of its activation. At the end of this period, it will be evaluated and decided by the General Directorate of Migration Management whether the insurance will be reactivated or not.

The principle is to get health services in the city of your residence. If you need a treatment which is not available in the city of your residence, you may be referred to a healthcare center in the closest and most appropriate city.

You can get your prescribed drugs free of charge at a contracted pharmacy. In case the pharmacist gives you a drug equivalent, you may be charged the difference.

Please make sure to bring your identity with you when you go to a hospital.

If you believe your rights to health care are violated, you may apply to the Board for Patients’ Rights at the Provincial Directorate of Health.

Right to Work:

You may apply for a work permit six months after you lodge an international protection application. Employers file in applications for work permits via e-government services to the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services.

Work permits are granted for a certain workplace and if you quit your job, the permit becomes invalid.

Thus, work permits need to be renewed for each change of workplace. One cannot hold several jobs with a single work permit.

If you would like to request to work at a city other than your city of residence, the decision lies with the Ministry of Interior.

Employee rights

- Employees should not get paid less than the minimum pay legally specified by law.
- Employers should provide insurance coverage and regularly pay insurance premiums for their employees.
- If it is determined that you work without a work permit, you may be fined. Likewise, the employer who employs you without a work permit is fined.





Frequently Asked Questions & False Facts among LGBTI Refugees in Turkey regarding UNHCR and Resettlement

1. What can I do if my refugee application is rejected by UNHCR?

According to the Law No. 6458 on Foreigners and International Protection, the responsible authority for your asylum application in Turkey is the Directorate General of Migration Management (DGMM). It is therefore, essential that you regularly follow-up on your asylum status with the Turkish authorities, and comply with your duties and responsibilities.

2. Can a person with a “refugee” status granted by UNHCR before the new system was in place, be deported by Turkish authorities?

Deportation is an administrative process implemented for foreigners whose stay in Turkey cannot be justified. In this respect, persons with international protection needs should present themselves to the national authorities to be able to claim protection against return to locations where their life and freedom would be at risk. A refugee recognised by UNHCR may receive negative decision from the national asylum institution if the elements of the application are assessed as insufficient to qualify for refugee status. In order to prevent such situations, UNHCR coordinates closely with the Turkish authorities and supports, also through legal aid providers, the individual during the appeal procedure to ensure that

the person is protected in line with international and national legal framework.

3. Is there a possibility that a refugee, previously granted status by UNHCR or will be granted status by DGMM would not be resettled?

Yes, it is possible and actually highly probable. Recognition of refugee status does not necessarily mean that a refugee will be referred for resettlement. Resettlement is not a right and is a solution only available to a fraction of the refugee population worldwide, based on the fulfilment of the resettlement criteria and on pledges by resettlement countries.

4. According to what criteria is a refugee found “not suitable for resettlement”?

There are parameters related to refugee’s family composition, profile and background. It may also be more suitable for the refugee to stay in Turkey than to be resettled (i.e. elderly with no relatives abroad).

5. Can a refugee stay in Turkey if s/he does not have a chance of being resettled?

The main issue is the refugee’s legal status vis-à-vis Turkey. However it has to be noted that the overwhelming majority of the refugees in Turkey will not be resettled simply because they outnumber the available resettlement spaces by a huge number.

6. How is the process of resettlement into third country implemented? “When I do have a country interview with UNHCR, will UNHCR assign me a third country, or am I supposed to choose a country?”

UNHCR identifies cases for resettlement processing based on global resettlement criteria. UNHCR conducts the initial assessment, prepares the case and presents it to the attention of a resettlement country. Countries are as-

signed by UNHCR, refugees cannot choose the country of resettlement. When deciding on the country, UNHCR matches the case against the specific criteria of the resettlement countries factors in other relevant issues, such as family links abroad.

7. According to what criteria do the countries accept refugees? Which countries accept LGBTI refugees?

Selection and processing of cases is done based on global resettlement criteria. All resettlement countries accept LGBTI refugees.

8. Is it possible to unite our files with our partners and be resettled in the same third country?

Composition of the file depends on individual circumstances but UNHCR does aim to resettle partners to the same resettlement country. Even though the cases are not united physically, they are linked to each other in the system.

9. Can we make asylum application through the embassies in Turkey to be resettled in the third country?

No. Embassies do not accept asylum applications. However there are other pathways, such as family reunification, private sponsorship applications, etc., each one of which have specific procedures involving embassies in Turkey. Some procedures can be initiated out of Turkey, others require for the process to be started in the country access to which is sought.

10. If I receive psychological or psychiatric support, my UNHCR file is said to be negatively affected in the process of resettlement.

This is false, receiving psychological or psychiatric support does not adversely affect your chances for resettlement.

11. If I get psychiatric support, is there a chance I will not be resettled in the third country?

One is not necessarily linked to the other. There are situations when a psychiatric evaluation is requested as part of the assessment of the case.

12. Is there a complaint mechanism we can refer to when we are ill-treated or abused by a UNHCR employee or a UNHCR partner organization employee?

You can report this through the following channels:

- **You can email UNHCR Turkey at turan@unhcr.org;**
- **You can put your complaint in a Complaints Box that are in UNHCR office in Ankara and at its partners' offices;**
- **You can submit your complaint in a sealed envelope to a UNHCR partner's office, to be delivered to UNHCR by hand.**

Your concerns are taken seriously, and will be treated confidentially. Your resettlement case will not be affected. If you do not want to use your name or case number, you can present your complaint anonymously.

If you have any information about a UNHCR staff member involved in any kind of fraud, please inform us using the Complaints Boxes, or make a complaint to the Inspector General's Office at UNHCR's Headquarters in Geneva:

- **Email: inspector@unhcr.org**
- **Confidential fax: +41 22 739 7380**
- **Mail: UNHCR, 94 Rue de Montbrillant, 1202 Geneva, Switzerland**

13. Is it possible for a third person or an organization to reach UNHCR regarding my file in UNHCR and to stop or accelerate my process? Which

complaint mechanism is there for use when someone approaches UNHCR to influence my file without my consent?

UNHCR evaluates each case on its own merits. Information about refugee cases is not shared with external parties without refugee's consent. Final decision on resettlement cases rests with the resettlement countries.

14. We separated with my partner. S/He knows all my personal information. Is it possible for her/him to do something about my file without my consent?

No outside party has access to a refugee file with UNHCR. Information about refugee cases is not shared with external parties without refugee's consent.

15. Is it possible for UNHCR and its partners to support us in changing satellite city we are registered with?

After registration with respective PDMM, further change in residence location remains prerogative of the responsible national authority, i.e. DGMM and its provincial departments. UNHCR, however, with support of its partners, may issue respective referral letter should this be requested by a PDMM. It has to be re-emphasized that DGMM remains the sole authority in providing a legal status to international protection applicants in the country, defining province of residence and authorizing any travel outside of assigned satellite city. However, if needed a petition can be issued to the responsible PDMM in order to change the satellite city while UNHCR partner in the respective city can help with the process.

16. If I complain to the police about an attack, abuse or any other right's violation, does this complaint negatively affect my UNHCR process?

No. It does not.

Kaos Gay and Lesbian Cultural Research and Solidarity Association (Kaos GL)

Kaos GL Association aims to help lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals (LGBTI) to embrace libertarian values, to support them in fulfillment of their existence as homosexuals and transgenders as well as to assist them in improving themselves and in contributing to peace and welfare of the society through their actions and lifestyles in individual, social and cultural settings.

Kaos GL, set up in Ankara in September of 1994, works to bring together homosexuals in Turkey to combat discrimination against homosexuals and achieve freedom in society. Guided by the motto that "liberation of homosexuals will also free heterosexuals", Kaos GL has been an active association, officially registered at the Directorate of Provincial Associations of the Governorship of Ankara since 2005.

Kaos GL de facto carries out and/or financially or otherwise supports activities in the fields of culture, education, arts and sports which would assist LGBTI people in adopting the fundamental values of freedom, justice and peace, in respecting human rights for all regardless of language, race, color, gender, sexual orientation, philosophical convictions, religion, sect or region; and in combatting discrimination against sexual orientation and gender identity in all walks of life.

Kaos GL Human Rights Program and Working Group works and develops policies under the motto that "LGBTI rights are an integral part of fundamental human rights". The Group drafts bills and engages in legislative pursuits, primarily constitutional studies, hate crimes and anti-discrimination laws, with a view to eliminating discrimination against LGBTI community, avoiding violations of human rights and improving equality. It monitors and reports on discrimination and violation of fundamental human rights such as rights to health, education, work, housing as well as access to goods and services; with an aim to improving human rights of LGBTI community in said areas. In line with these goals, the Group monitors and draws up reports on human rights situation. It organizes the Symposium Against Discrimination and provides human rights trainings, Psychological Counselling and Guidance, as well

as human rights trainings specifically addressed to social workers, teachers, psychologists, psychiatrists and lawyers.

Kaos GL Association has engaged in refugee rights since 2007 as a part of its Human Rights Program.

Since 2017, Refugee Rights Program carries out its work as a separate program under Human Rights



Program. In this regard, Kaos GL provides legal and psychosocial counselling for LGBTI refugees, visits them at satellite cities where they live and conducts face-to-face meetings. With the help of meetings and workshops held with the participation of LGBTI refugees, Kaos GL works to shape its policy in line with the demands and expectations of refugees. A link to "refugee" section is available on the www.kaosgl.org web site in respect of rights-based publishing.

How Kaos GL provides support to LGBTI refugees:

LGBTI refugees face multiple types of discrimination in Turkey. LGBTI refugees who leave their country on grounds of discrimination and violence based on SOGIIC (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex Condition), suffer from homophobic-transphobic violence in addition to racism and xenophobia. Therefore, Kaos GL works to facilitate the access of LGBTI refugees to fundamental rights, official bodies and social networks wherever they reside. Kaos GL provides legal and social assistance to LGBTI refugees in this regard. However, there is no guarantee that problems will be thoroughly solved. Kaos GL only tries to assist in finding solutions to problems by providing the services below:

Legal Assistance:

- Provides counselling services for problems based on SOGIIC (Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex Condition)
- Provides counselling services and referral to relevant healthcare services for transitional process and hormonal drugs usage
- Provides counselling services concerning the asylum system in Turkey and gives information about refugee institutions
- Provides counselling services for refugee applications filed to DGMM-Directorate General for Migration Management

- Provides counselling on the challenges of re-settlement in a third country
- Provides counselling services concerning judicial assistance provided by bar associations and establishes contact with bar associations when necessary
- Follows-up the status of victims of sexual abuse, violence and threat and establishes contact with relevant agencies when necessary
- Provides information about the physical protection of people under risk and alerts relevant agencies of their situation
- Alerts UNHCR immediately of cases where urgent protection is required
- Provides information when the satellite city of residence needs to be changed

Social Assistance:

- Establishes contact with relevant authorities about housing problems
- Provides referral to professional experts for cases of access to health-care, sexual health and gender re-assignment process and if requested, provides services through Kaos GL health networks
- Provides counselling services for the right of access to education
- Galvanizes relevant authorities into action to provide economic support
- Provides counselling and referral services for psychological and social support
- Provides counselling and referral services in cases of violence and discrimination
- Provides counselling services to minimize the obstacles against participation to social life and, if requested, referral to areas of socialization

Organizations from Which Refugees Can Get Support in Turkey

➤ **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)**

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was established in 1950 by United Nations General Assembly to lead and to coordinate the international intervention to protect refugees and to bring solutions to refugees' problems.

Main aim of UNHCR is to protect the rights and the well-being of refugees and asylum-seekers. UNHCR advocates for the right to asylum by all and helps with the processes of local integration, resettlement and if possible for voluntary repatriation.

For further information and to contact the organization you can visit the website at www.unhcr.org

➤ **Association of Bridging People**

Halkların Köprüsü Derneği / Association of Bridging People is a non-profit charity and solidarity association, founded with a view to developing/strengthening public friendship and solidarity between people and facilitating solidarity vis-à-vis social-political catastrophes and natural disasters with severe social consequences. Purpose of the existence is to fight against all sorts of alienation, hate speech, discrimination, racism, nationalism, sexism and denominationalism; to stand in solidarity with the sufferers regardless of their language, religion,

race, denomination, gender; to organize solidarity events conducive to the establishment of peace and equality between people; and to stand side-by-side with each and every "other" against social exclusion.

For further information and to contact the organization you can visit the website at <http://www.halklarinkoprusu.org/>

➤ **Support to Life Association**

Support to Life Association is a humanitarian organization founded with the principle aim of helping communities affected from calamity to meet their basic needs and rights. Support to Life is conducting its activities since 2005 with principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence and accountability on the areas Emergency Assistance, Refugee Support, Child Protection and Strengthening Civil Society and Coordination

For further information and to contact the organization you can visit the website at <http://www.hayatadestek.org/>

➤ **Art Everywhere Association-Sirkhane**

Her Yerde Sanat Derneği / Art Everywhere Association was founded with the idea to organize a one-time festival in 2012 in Mardin that shares the border with Syria. The Association carries out circuses and art workshops for children and youth in the region, in schools, in refugee

camps and everywhere. The activities aim to alter damaged childhood of the children who are affected by conflicts from Syria, Iraq and Turkey and to enrich their imagination by using social circus pedagogy.

For further information and to contact the organization you can visit the website at <http://heryerdesanat.org/>

➤ **Hevi LGBTI Association**

Hêvî LGBTI was formed by a group of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex people who met at the LGBT Block in Gezi Park during the Gezi Resistance. Hêvî believes in the idea that LGBTI politics should be evaluated within a broad political perspective. Hêvî takes the issues of class, ethnicity, sexism, colonialism, and the rights and freedoms of nature and humans as the inseparable parts of LGBTI politics. The Association is anti-militarist. Hêvî believes that the contribution of LGBTIs to the politics of peace is the responsibility in achieving an inclusive and stable peace.

Hêvî aims to reach a world that everyone has equal citizenship rights as the opposite of heterosexualism and patriarchal world order.

For further information and to contact the organization you can visit the website at <http://hevilgbti.org/>

➤ **The Research Center on Asylum and Migration**

The Research Center on Asylum and Migration / İltica ve Göç Araştırmaları Merkezi (İGAM) was founded by a group of academics, researchers, journalists and humanitarian workers to fill the gap of nonexistence of an independent research center on asylum and migration issues in Turkey. The Center's missions are encouraging researches in the field of migration and asylum, supporting academic researchers in the field and recording data based on research findings and conducting researches. Main activities are rights advocacy, raising public awareness, lobbying and creating network.

➤ **Human Resource Development Foundation (HRDF)**

Human Resource Development Foundation (HRDF) is a leading non-profit civil society organization. It was established in 1988 by 13 founding members comprised of businesspersons and academics and currently has 43 members in the Board of Trustee.

Mission of the Foundation is to contribute to the solution of health, education and employment problems which have a negative impact on the economic, social and cultural development of human resource.

For further information and to contact the organization you can visit the website at <http://www.ikgv.org/index1.html>

➤ **Kaos GL Association**

The purpose of Kaos Gay and Lesbian Cultural Research and Solidarity Association (Kaos GL) is to support lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex individuals in embracing libertarian values, realizing their own existence, and in cultivating themselves in order to contribute to the development of social peace and welfare together with the development of their individual, social, and cultural life and behaviour.

Kaos GL actively supports the activities of cultural, educational, artistic, sports or similar activities to endorse achievements to be done in this framework so that LGBT individuals may embrace freedom, justice and peace as their fundamental values; they may conceive human rights as the rights of all human beings without making discrimination based on language, race, colour, gender, sexual orientation, philosophical conviction, religion, religious sect, locality etc., and they may struggle against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in every aspect of life.

For further information and to contact the organization you can visit the website at <http://www.kaosgldernegi.org>

➤ **Red Umbrella Sexual Health and Human Rights Association**

Red Umbrella's vision corresponds to a social, economic and political order that ensures elimination of all kinds of rights violation, social exclusion, stigmatization and ignorance to which sex workers are exposed to, that sex work is recognized as a labour type and sex workers' human dignity is protected.

Red Umbrella considers sex workers' rights within the scope of human rights and labor rights and believes that sex workers' problems should be voiced primarily by sex workers themselves and advocates this idea in every platform.

For further information and to contact the organization you can visit the website at <http://www.kirmizisemsiye.org/>

➤ **Mavi Kalem Social Assistance and Solidarity Association**

Mavi Kalem was founded on the basis of the idea of "volunteering is a life style".

Mavi Kalem does not allow any kind of judgmental, discriminative wording and behaviour in its internal affairs and studies. There is no room for ethnic, religious, sexist and other segregationist perspectives and no room for violence and hatred speech as well.

Mavi Kalem does not define itself through political, religious and ethnical identities. It does stand on the side of subjects of freedom, human rights, democratic rights, right of health care, gender equality, women's rights, rights of LGBTI individuals, children's rights and prevention of discrimination.

For further information and to contact the organization you can visit the website at <https://www.mavikalem.org/>

➤ **Association for Solidarity with Refugees (Mülteci-Der)**

Association for Solidarity with Refugees has been founded following the process which started with a meeting that was carried out with the participation of representatives of civ-

il society organizations in Izmir, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and representatives of some public institutions on 16 June 2007. Mülteci-Der is an Izmir based Association.

Mülteci-Der is a human rights and humanitarian solidarity organization working on the problems of refugees, asylum seekers, migrants who left their countries; the people seeking temporary asylum and the people who might be under secondary protection procedure regardless of these people's religion, race, gender, sexual orientation, political opinion and regardless of any other reason.

For further information and to contact the organization you can visit the website at <http://www.multeci.org.tr/>

➤ **Refugee Support Center-Association (MUDEM)**

Refugee Support Center-Association was founded in Ankara in 2014 to carry out activities at national and international level designed to address the challenges faced by asylum-seekers, refugees, immigrants, human trafficking victims, international protection applicants and stateless persons. RSC is an impartial and a not-for-profit association, it aims primarily to support meeting of the life-sustaining needs of the refugees, provide legal advice on access to social rights, make disbursements of aid for urgent needs and strengthen relations between civil society organizations and public organizations working in the field.

For further information and to contact the organization you can visit the website at <http://mudem.org/>.

➤ **Refugee Rights Turkey**

Refugee Rights Turkey carries out specialized activities on access to legal protection mechanisms for foreigners escaping war and persecution and seeking asylum in Turkey; on increasing capacity of legal support to asylum seekers; on encouraging solidarity and positive attitudes towards asylum seekers in local communities

and public opinion and for improving Turkey's asylum legislation and policies in line with international standards. Refugee Rights Turkey is an association and civil society organization based in Istanbul.

For further information and to contact the organization you can visit the website at <https://www.mhd.org.tr/tr/>.

➤ **Association for Assistance Solidarity and Support with Refugees and Asylum Seekers (ASRA)**

ASRA, is a civil society and humanitarian aid organisation which contributes to improving refugee rights and living conditions and meeting basic needs of the individuals and communities who are affected by natural disasters, humanitarian crisis, conflicts and human rights violations.

ASRA continues its works at national and international level within principles of non-discrimination, transparency, impartiality, and accountability, according to the international standards of humanitarian privacy. ASRA has a role in enhancing living conditions of crisis affected individuals and communities through activities and emergency responses carried out at national and international level.

For further information and to contact the organization you can visit the website at <http://msyd.org/>

➤ **Refugees and Asylum Seekers Assistance and Solidarity Association (RASAS)**

Refugees and Asylum Seekers Assistance and Solidarity Association (RASAS) was established in 2014 to seek solutions to the problems of people who have left their country and are in need of international protection. The Association supports people in need with its staff of different nationalities

Short name of the Association is Refugees Association (Mülteciler Derneği) and it carries out its activities without any discrimination on the basis of language, religion, race, gender, age, disability, political discrepancy and other reasons.

The Association works in cooperation with the private sector, civil society organizations and public institutions to help solving primarily the basic problems of refugees and to help meet all their vital needs and to provide a faster social integration for refugees.

For further information and to contact the organization you can visit the website at <https://multeciler.org.tr/>

➤ **Positive Living Association**

Positive Living Association, which was founded by the alliance of people living with HIV, their relatives, volunteers and relevant professionals, aims to reach all people living with HIV. It strives to ensure that these people and their relatives benefit from the quality and free services, without being subjected to any discrimination, and it also strives for their physical and mental empowerment. In order to secure the full exercise of their rights without any issues, the association undertakes to offer counselling and support services, raise awareness, and contribute to monitoring and development of the services and legislations by cooperating with public and civil society organizations working in this field.

Vision of Positive Living Association is to create a society that keeps abreast of accurate and up-to-date information about HIV, that is free from every kind of prejudice and discrimination against people living with HIV, where all people have easy access to quality and free services regarding prevention, early diagnosis, support, treatment, care, and where all rights of these people are protected by effective implemented laws.

For further information, you can visit the website at <http://www.pozitifyasam.org>

➤ **Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants (SGDD-ASAM)**

Since 1995, Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants (SGDD-ASAM) has dedicated itself to bring solutions to the problems with which refugees and asylum seekers face in Turkey, to help them meet their primary

needs and to support them to enjoy their fundamental rights, live in a harmony with the host community and enjoy services. SGDD-ASAM has been providing psycho-social support to asylum seekers and refugees coming from conflict zones since its establishment. SGDD-ASAM strives to create a safe place and ensuring well-being for asylum seekers and refugees.

For further information, you can visit the website at <http://sgdd.org.tr/>

➤ **Social Policies, Gender Identity, and Sexual Orientation Studies Association (SPoD)**

SPoD, established by a group of academics, lawyers, and activists in 2011, has been working for finding permanent and comprehensive solutions for the problems of LGBTI people and for reducing the level of violence, oppression and discrimination that LGBTI individuals are exposed to. SPoD ensures legal, social, academic and psychological consultancy; provides training for psychiatric personnel, social workers, lawyers, institutions, and municipalities; organizes seminars, panels, advocacy meetings, Policy and Activism Schools, election campaigns, creates support groups for Trans people with disabilities and refugees. All of the people who carry out these activities are SPoD volunteers.

For further information, you can visit the website at <http://www.spod.org.tr/>

➤ **Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations (SYDV)**

Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations (SYDV) has been established in accordance with the provisions of Turkish Civil Code by relying on Law no 3294 on Encouraging Social Assistance and Solidarity to carry out activities and works relevant to the Law in every province and district. Currently, 1002 Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundations serve the citizens and refugees all over the country.

➤ **Community Volunteers Foundation (TOG)**

Community Volunteers Foundation set out with the vision of achieving social peace, solidarity and change together with the youth by empowering them.

Young individuals who are Community Volunteer's gather in clubs, groups or communities in their universities, and carry out sustainable social responsibility projects to respond to the needs that they identify.

These projects not only contribute to the society, but also help the youth become responsible, active individuals and support their personal development.

➤ **Turkish Red Crescent (TRC)**

Turkish Red Crescent had emerged as a result of the willingness to indiscriminately help the soldiers suffering from injuries or illnesses in the battlefield.

Its mission is to provide aid for needy and defenceless people in disasters, being a proactive organization, developing cooperation in the society, providing safe blood and decreasing vulnerability.

Its vision is to become the organisation which can be taken as a model in Humanitarian aid service in Turkey and in the world; and the Organisation which is with people in their hardest time.

For further information and to contact the organization you can visit the website at

<https://www.kizilay.org.tr/>

➤ **International Organization for Migration (IOM)-United Nations Migration Agency**

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) – the UN Migration Agency opened its first offices in Turkey in 1991, following the aftermath of the first Gulf War. The Mission's activities began with resettlement for Iraqi refugees,

and were later expanded to migration management programmes. IOM's partnership with the Republic of Turkey was formalized in November 2004 when Turkey was granted member status to IOM. The partnership between IOM and Turkey continued since then, including support drafting the Law of Foreigners and International Protection, as well as establishing the Ministry of Interior's Directorate General for Migration Management in 2013.

IOM works in the areas of migrant assistance, immigration and border management, labour migration, emergency, preparedness, response and recovery, resettlement and movement management and migration management.

For further information and to contact the organization you can visit the website at <http://www.turkey.iom.int/>

> **Citizens' Assembly**

Citizens' Assembly (formerly Helsinki Citizens' Assembly) is a civil society organization working on fundamental rights and freedom, peace, democracy and pluralism.

It aims to introduce - into daily life - values such as life with dignity, the rule of law and justice, accountability, transparency and participatory public administration, gender equality as enshrined in international conventions; an economy which does not destroy the social texture and peace, cities and the planet; resolution of conflicts and problems through peaceful negotiations, consultation and dialogue and to ensure that these values be concretely reflected and spread on a civic basis.

For further information and to contact the organization you can visit the website at <https://www.hyd.org.tr/tr/>

> **Yuva Association**

Yuva Association was founded in 2010 with the aim and passion to change the world, to make it a better, fairer and more sustainable place and to ensure that it remains as a nest/home for all living beings.

Their main aim to achieve with their protection program is to provide people with information and safe space which enable them to evaluate their selves and environments; to support them to build their own coping mechanisms through empowering interventions and to carry out facilitating works to remove the obstacles in accessing fundamental rights and services. To achieve this aim, they adopt an intertwined approach which includes both right-based and empowerment-based approaches in their protection program.

For further information and to contact the organization you can visit the website at <https://www.yuva.org.tr/>



Turkey's Challenge with LGBTI Refugees

This report aims to document the obstacles faced by LGBTI Refugees in Turkey in enjoying and accessing the fundamental rights and services in various areas and in social life as well as the discrimination and violence they encountered on account of their sexual orientation, gender identity and intersex conditions (SOGIIC).



Türkiye'nin LGBTİ Mülteciler ile İmtihanı

Bu rapor ile Türkiye'deki mülteci LGBTİ'lerin temel hak ve hizmetlere erişimlerinde karşılaştıkları engellerin ve sosyal hayatta mülteci olmanın yanı sıra cinsel yönelim, cinsiyet kimliği ve interseks durum temelli maruz kaldıkları ayrımcılığın ve şiddetin kayıt altına alınması amaçlanmıştır.