

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Report on Equal Political Participation

Call for

Inputs

Focus Country: Türkiye

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About Kaos GL Association: On September 20, 1994, the organization joined the field of advocacy as “Kaos GL” magazine; in 2005, it applied to the Governorate of Ankara and gained the status of an association. It fights for the human rights of LGBTI+ persons. It carries out its activities through human rights, media and communication, refugee rights, academic and cultural rights programs. It engages in advocacy, lobbying, human rights monitoring and reporting, journalism, cultural and academic journal publishing.

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GENERAL FRAMEWORK ON THE POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT OF LGBTI+ PEOPLE

1. State Party excludes LGBTI+ individuals from participation channels at both the legislative and policy levels.
2. President R. Tayyip ERDOĞAN declared 2025 the “Year of the Family” following a speech that directly targeted LGBTI+’s as a threat.¹ The speech provided detailed justification for LGBTI+ opposition.²
3. Government-backed think tanks are directly linking this announcement to anti-LGBTI+ public policies.³
4. The president stated, “The fight against LGBT perversion is also a fight for freedom, dignity, and the future of humanity.” He declared the years 2025-2035 as the “Decade of the Family” and explained that this policy is permanent.⁴
5. Ministers are also making special efforts to promote anti-LGBTI+ policies within their institutions.⁵
6. The Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) and the Information Technologies and Communications Authority (BTK) have directly implemented it.⁶ The Presidency of Religious Affairs (DİYANET) has directly targeted LGBTI+’s in at least four sermons delivered in over 90,000 mosques across Türkiye and has carried out specific efforts to spread these policies within society.⁷
7. In its sermon on 02.05.2025, DİYANET targeted LGBTI+’s by stating that “*homosexuality is a perversion cursed by Allah, it is forbidden, it is a great sin.*”
8. The participation of LGBTI+’s in the public sphere through legal organizations is being obstructed through administrative harassment and judicial mechanisms. In 2025, an LGBTI+ association was shut down.⁸
9. Criminal proceedings have been initiated against 11 members of this association (including the author of this report). In a letter dated February 11, 2026, sent to the State party, OHCHR requested information about these proceedings.⁹
10. There are other lawsuits filed against LGBTI+’s for exercising their right to organize.¹⁰

¹<https://www.nbcnews.com/nbc-out/out-news/turkeys-erdogan-launches-year-family-attack-lgbtq-community-rcna187471>

²<https://kaosgl1.org/en/single-news/the-family-year-was-introduced-lgbti-s-are-targeted-again-desexualisation-using-lgbt-as-a-battering-ram-34>

³ <https://www.setav.org/en/family-year>

⁴ <https://www.trtworld.com/article/0e0f8e85c91e>

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<https://kaosgl1.org/en/single-news/minister-of-national-education-yusuf-tekin-targeted-lgbti-individuals-we-are-against-the-imposition-of-lgbt>

⁶ <https://www.duvarenglish.com/turkeys-year-of-family-becomes-year-against-lgbti-news-65764>

⁷<https://dinhizmetleri.diyamet.gov.tr/Documents/To%20Protect%20the%20Human%20Nature%20is%20to%20Protect%20the%20Family.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/organization/genc-lgbti-association>

⁹ AL TUR 3/2026, Joint Communication From Special Procedures

¹⁰ <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/tr/case/judicial-harassment-lgbtqi-rights-defender-defne-guzel>

11. Human Rights and Equality Institution of Türkiye (HREIT) does not accept applications from LGBTI+'s, citing its founding law as justification, a practice that has also been criticized in the latest concluding observations reports of the UN Committee on Civil and Political Rights and the UN CAT¹¹
12. The Digital Media Commission of Turkish Parliament has a specific agenda for the removal of LGBTI+'s from the digital sphere. Its chair has drawn attention with anti-LGBTI+ statements.¹²
13. Within this context, the participation of LGBTI+'s in public affairs and political participation is surrounded by insurmountable barriers.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC AFFAIRS

14. There are no legal or constitutional guarantees regarding public participation for LGBTI+'s.(Rec 14.b)
15. LGBTI+'s are not involved in the design, implementation, or evaluation of laws, regulations, policies, programs, or strategies that affect them under any circumstances. There have been two legislative initiatives concerning LGBTI+'s in Parliament, but these initiatives have largely failed due to public pressure, civil society reactions, and calls from international actors. However, this situation has not changed the fact that participation channels remain closed to LGBTI+'s. The situation is no different at the implementation level. For example, a 21-year-old age limit has been imposed on hormone replacement therapy for transgender individuals, contrary to regulations.¹³ The Ministry of Health did not consult with any expert NGOs regarding this application. Turkish Medical Association and the Türkiye Psychiatric Association issued a joint statement announcing to the public that the application was contrary to scientific principles, medical ethics, and the right to health.¹⁴ This situation demonstrates that participation channels are closed not only to LGBTI+'s and expert organizations, but to all expert organizations when it comes to LGBTI+ issues. (Rec 14.c)
16. The state party disregards the freedom of association and peaceful assembly of LGBTI+'s. Since 2015, pride weeks have been banned by governors.¹⁵ Despite unlawful bans, LGBTI+'s who peacefully gathered to exercise their constitutional rights were attacked by the police. In 2025, the Istanbul Pride March was banned, 53 people were detained, and 3 people were arrested.¹⁶ The Court has issued a travel ban for the other 50 people. Among these individuals are three lawyers who were working in the field to provide legal assistance. The criminal case against these individuals is ongoing.¹⁷ It has been stated above that associations advocating for LGBTI+ rights have been shut down and criminal proceedings have been initiated against their members.(§ 9 - 11) The situation is no different for university clubs. Clubs are being

¹¹ <https://kaosgl1.org/en/single-news/tihck-continued-its-discriminatory-attitude-towards-lgbti-s-in-the-parliament>

¹² <https://kaosgl1.org/en/single-news/akp-deputy-chair-yayman-targets-lgbti-people-protecting-the-family-is-a-matter-of-national-security>

¹³ <https://bianet.org/haber/turkey-restricts-hormone-therapy-access-for-trans-people-under-21-308907>

¹⁴ https://www.ttb.org.tr/haber_goster.php?Guid=4ca33b90-5e5d-11f0-8892-211508e979a1

¹⁵ <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/06/29/middleeast/istanbul-pride-march-police-detain-dozens-intl-latam>

¹⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/jun/29/turkish-police-arrest-more-than-50-people-before-banned-istanbul-pride-parade>

¹⁷ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/08/turkiye-53-pride-march-participants-must-be-acquitted-and-those-arbitrarily-detained-must-be-released/>

shut down on the grounds that they “promote homosexuality.” This process has been ongoing since 2021.¹⁸ (Rec 14.d)

17. There is intense pressure to suppress the freedom of expression of LGBTI+’s. Artistic forms of expression, even songs, are being banned, singers are being prosecuted for their lyrics, and travel bans are being imposed on them.¹⁹
18. Intensive efforts to block LGBTI+ news portals continue. These blockades are carried out through administrative harassment or court rulings. Research conducted by Kaos GL on reader complaints regarding access to www.kaosgl.org, Türkiye's oldest and most-clicked LGBTI+ news portal, revealed that access to the site had been restricted by an administrative decision taken without notifying Kaos GL.²⁰
19. Access to the Kaos GL news portal website has also been banned by court rulings. Thus, even if the family user profile is not selected, users' right to receive news and Kaos GL's freedom of the press are being violated.²¹ During the same period, the X and Instagram account of the Kaos GL news portal, was also blocked.²² ²³ The backup X account it had previously opened was also blocked within a few days.
20. The authority to publish public announcements and advertisements in media outlets lies with the Press Advertisement Agency. These announcements and advertisements are an important source of income for media outlets, but LGBTI+ inclusive news outlets are not benefiting from this opportunity.
21. The high fines imposed by RTÜK on LGBTI+ inclusive media outlets are a major obstacle to sustainable media.²⁴ (Rec 14.f)
22. Discrimination is addressed in Article 10 of the Constitution, entitled “Equality Before the Law.”²⁵ However, this regulation concerns equality before the law and does not result in laws guaranteeing positive action being regulated in a way that covers everyone. In other words, if a law establishes a right for one identity, parliament is not obliged to establish the same right for other identities. In this context, legislation prohibiting discrimination is limited. One such piece of legislation is the Law on the HREIT The Institution can issue administrative sanctions regarding applications concerning discrimination. However, the Institution systematically rejects applications made by LGBTI+’s because the forms of discrimination are specifically listed in Article 3 of the law, but SOGI are not among them.²⁶ HREIT rejects applications from LGBTI+’s, citing the absence of SOGI forms in its founding law as justification. The Ombudsman institution has also not issued any decisions preventing discrimination against LGBTI+’s. As mentioned above, in recent reviews, the UN Committees have made recommendations to the state party regarding anti-discrimination

¹⁸ <https://bianet.org/haber/bogazici-university-s-lgbti-studies-club-closed-by-the-appointed-rector-238535>

¹⁹ <https://bianet.org/haber/queer-singer-mabel-matiz-given-travel-ban-in-obscurity-probe-over-song-lyrics-311767>

²⁰ <https://kaosgl.org/en/single-news/lgbti-s-targeted-by-rtuk-and-btk-officials>

²¹ <https://bianet.org/haber/access-to-kaos-gl-website-blocked-by-court-order-308930>

²²

[https://mediamonitoringdatabase.org/access-ban-on-x-account-kaosgl-org/#:~:text=The%20X%20\(formerly%20Twitter\)%20account,and%20the%20Ankara%20Pride%20March.](https://mediamonitoringdatabase.org/access-ban-on-x-account-kaosgl-org/#:~:text=The%20X%20(formerly%20Twitter)%20account,and%20the%20Ankara%20Pride%20March.)

²³ <https://bianet.org/haber/court-blocks-access-to-kaos-gl-lgbti-group-s-instagram-account-310595>

²⁴ <https://bianet.org/haber/rtuk-fines-streaming-platforms-orders-removal-of-films-over-anti-family-content-311665>

²⁵ https://www.anayasa.gov.tr/media/7258/anayasa_eng.pdf

²⁶ <https://www.tih.gov.tr/public/editor/uploads/1660833133.pdf>

legislation. In addition, in the UPR review, five states have recommended that the state party adopt inclusive anti-discrimination legislation..²⁷

23. The Turkish Penal Code punishes certain acts committed with discriminatory motivation under Article 122.²⁸ However, since there is no discrimination based on SOGI among the motivations here, it is not applicable to LGBTI+'s. Seven states recommended that the state party amend this law to be inclusive of LGBTI+'s during the UPR review.²⁹
24. LGBTI+'s do not have equal access to employment. Transwomen sex workers are prohibited from working legally as long as their gender is not legally recognized. The registration applications of transwomen sex workers whose gender is legally recognized have been largely suspended. There is no legislation preventing discrimination against LGBTI+'s in hiring processes. Access to employment is limited. LGBTI+'s who do gain access to employment are forced to work under unequal standards or are forced to work without expressing their identity. LGBTI+'s are not accepted into professions such as police, military, religious officials, and religious teachers. According to the Constitutional Court, the subjective conditions of these sectors are an obstacle to the employment of LGBTI+'s. Therefore, this discrimination is legitimized at the highest level.
25. The state party is blocking access to information without reasonable justification. Kaos GL submitted 19 requests to numerous public institutions, eight of which were rejected. The public institutions that responded to the requests were mostly municipalities affiliated with the opposition party. Ministries either rejected requests for information or obstructed the exercise of the right to information with irrelevant and inadequate responses. Appeals were filed with the Information Access Evaluation Board within the Ministry of Justice for two of these cases, and both appeals were rejected.

CONCLUSION

26. In Türkiye, the political participation and involvement of LGBTI+s in public affairs is severely restricted due to both legal gaps and systematic public policies. When anti-discrimination legislation that is not inclusive, restrictions on the freedoms of association and assembly, limitations on freedom of expression and access to information, and institutional exclusion practices are considered together, it is evident that effective and meaningful participation channels for LGBTI+'s are effectively closed. This situation creates a clear inconsistency with Türkiye's international human rights obligations.

²⁷40.245 Germany; 40.311 Canada; 40.313 The Kingdom of the Netherlands; 40.315 Finland; 40.316 Uruguay

²⁸[https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-REF\(2016\)011-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-REF(2016)011-e)

²⁹40.37 Ireland; 40.308 Mexico; 40.309 Australia; 40.310 Iceland; 40.311 Canada; 40.312 Norway; 40.313 The Kingdom of the Netherlands