

**REPRISALS AGAINST HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN TÜRKİYE  
FOLLOWING ENGAGEMENT  
WITH  
UNITED NATIONS MECHANISMS**

**Input to the Report of the Secretary-General**

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## **A. INTRODUCTION**

1. Definitive proof of whether a government action was carried out in retaliation for advocacy efforts or whether other motivations were involved can only be established where government officials explicitly state this. As far as we know, there is no known instance of such acknowledgment in the case of Türkiye.
2. Consequently, reprisals for human rights advocacy can often be observed through the following patterns: an increase in advocacy activities coinciding with an intensification of harassment by state officials; changes in enforcement practices during this period; the abandonment of old patterns and the implementation of new tactics of repression; and the prevalence of these tactics, which are generally directed at advocates.
3. The intimidation of human rights defenders through judicial and administrative harassment is widespread, particularly in regions where violations are prevalent. This prevalence makes it even more difficult to determine whether an act of harassment is carried out with the intent of retaliation.
4. The UN has mechanisms and procedures in place for reporting violations against human rights defenders. Given the particular importance of those subjected to reprisals, the procedures regarding reprisals should be considered as more specific tools. In this context, Kaos GL has not yet utilized this mechanism.

## **B. THE INCREASE IN KAOS GL'S RECENT UN REPORTS**

5. Kaos GL has made greater use of UN mechanisms and procedures, primarily due to regional mechanisms losing their effectiveness. This notable increase is also attributable to the fact that access to these mechanisms has become easier, as well as to the efforts of human rights programs based in Türkiye regarding UN mechanisms.
6. In addition, Kaos GL has implemented a series of operational and organizational changes within its own structure to facilitate greater use of UN mechanisms. As a result of these changes, the reports listed below have been produced.
7. June 10, 2024: Kaos GL, together with its allies, submitted an evidence-based shadow report to the Committee Against Torture.
8. July 18, 2024: The organization participated in the Committee Against Torture's country review in Geneva (80th Session) through its representative in the civil society dialogue. It was also present at the meeting between the state delegation and the Committee.

9. September 16, 2024: Kaos GL, together with its allies, submitted an evidence-based shadow report to the UN Human Rights Committee for the periodic review of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. It also participated in person in the dialogue the Committee held with civil society organizations in Geneva.
10. September 2024: A shadow report on Türkiye's 4th Universal Periodic Review was submitted in collaboration with allies.
11. October 14, 2024: Kaos GL participated in the 142nd session of the periodic review of Türkiye's implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, sending a representative to the civil society dialogue.
12. February 20, 2025: Kaos GL attended the NGO pre-session held in Hall XXII at the Palais des Nations through its representative.
13. September 8, 2025: An oral statement titled "60th Session of the Human Rights Council: Outcome of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) for Türkiye" was delivered.
14. September 17, 2025: Kaos GL submitted a report titled "Raising Their Voices: HRDs Respond to the Human Rights Crisis" to the relevant UN mandates.
15. On September 29, 2025: Kaos GL submitted a follow-up report titled "Alternative Report on Issues Identified for the Fifth Periodic Report of the United Nations Committee Against Torture Concerning Türkiye" to the Committee Against Torture.
16. September 29, 2025: Kaos GL submitted a report titled "Forced Medical Interventions on Intersex Children in Türkiye" to the Committee Against Torture, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health, and the Independent Expert on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity.
17. On October 9, 2025, Kaos GL submitted a report titled "Unmet Health Needs of Trans People in Türkiye: Exclusion from Sexual and Reproductive Health Services" to the relevant UN mandates.
18. On November 21, 2025, Kaos GL submitted a confidential report titled "Restriction of Freedom of Association Through Systematic and Arbitrary Audit Practices Targeting LGBTI+ Rights Organizations in Türkiye" to the relevant UN mandates.
19. January 15, 2026: Kaos GL submitted the report titled "Submission to the Call for Input – Thematic Report on Violence and Discrimination against LBQ Women (HRC62)" to the relevant UN mandates.
20. It has submitted its report titled "Contribution to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' Call for Reports on Equal Political Participation: Focus Country: Türkiye" to the relevant UN mandates.

21. These reports were submitted exclusively to the United Nations. During this period, Kaos GL submitted reports to the Council of Europe either upon request or directly, and utilized the European Court of Human Rights as a judicial mechanism.

## **C. KAOS GL's ADVOCACY TEAM**

22. Kerem Dikmen, Coordinator of the Kaos GL Human Rights Program, led all of these processes, authored the reports, and was listed as the contact person in the reports. He also traveled to Geneva on several occasions to present the joint reports prepared by Kaos GL and its allies.
23. During the reporting process, human rights expert Defne GÜZEL led the data collection phases.

## **D. REPRISAL TARGETS**

24. The Izmir-based Young LGBT+ Association is a civil society organization dedicated to collecting data on violence, oppression, social exclusion, and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity—occurring across all sectors of society and particularly affecting young people—and to working toward the elimination of all forms of discrimination.
25. The Ankara-based 17 May Association, meanwhile, engages in scientific, cultural, social, and artistic, as well as educational activities to combat all forms of discrimination—whether at the individual or societal level—based on sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression, by conducting scientific, cultural, social, and artistic educational activities, while also carrying out social services, advocacy, awareness-raising, and human rights monitoring, documentation, and reporting activities, with the aim of contributing to the construction of an equal and free society.
26. Like all other associations, both of these associations were audited by the Ministry of the Interior in September 2024. Following a two-month correspondence process regarding the audit, the Ministry filed a report with the Chief Public Prosecutors' Offices in Ankara and Izmir, requesting that a closure case be filed against the association and that an investigation be conducted into the obscenity charges regarding images widely circulated on social media.

## **F. LAWSUITS**

### **F.a.1. AGAINST KEREM DİKMEN**

27. A lawsuit seeking the closure of the Young LGBT+ Association has been filed. Kerem Dikmen, who also serves as the Coordinator of the Kaos GL Human Rights Program, represented the association in the closure proceedings. During this process, a

criminal investigation into allegations of obscenity was also launched against the association. Kerem Dikmen is also a member of the association's supervisory board.

28. A decision not to prosecute has been issued in the investigation conducted under Case No. 2024/182447. The investigation was conducted against the association as a legal entity.
29. However, while this investigation was ongoing, a new investigation was launched. Kerem DİKMEN was named as a suspect in this investigation and was questioned in June 2025. In the days that followed, criminal charges were filed in October 2025 against 11 members of the association's board of directors and supervisory board, including Kerem DİKMEN. The indictment alleges a violation of Article 32(p) of the Associations Law.<sup>1</sup>

## **F.a.2. REASONS FOR CLASSIFYING THE CASE AS REPRISAL**

30. Article 32(p) of the Law reads as follows: "Those who establish associations prohibited under Article 30(b), as well as association executives who act in violation of this provision, shall be punished by imprisonment for a term of one to three years and a fine of no less than fifty days, unless their acts warrant a more severe penalty, and the association shall also be dissolved."
31. Article 33 of the Law states: "The term 'association executives' used in Article 32 of this Law refers to the chairperson of the association's board of directors." Thus, under normal circumstances, it is legally impossible to bring a criminal case against a member of an association's audit committee. However, perhaps for the first time in Türkiye legal history, a criminal case has been brought against an individual who is not an association executive, yet for a crime that could only have been committed by an association executive. This is a highly unusual situation.
32. In fact, a decision to drop the charges regarding the posts is on file, and this decision has become final. Kerem DİKMEN is not a suspect in that case. The investigation into obscenity was closed with a decision of no prosecution; however, prior to that, a new investigation was opened citing the same posts as grounds, and Kerem DİKMEN—who was not included in the first investigation—was included in this one. This was done on the basis of the same acts, thereby violating the ne bis in idem principle. This is also an extraordinary situation.
33. Given that Kerem Dikmen is the common link between the advocacy activities summarized above and these exceptional measures, and particularly in light of the fact that the prosecution has requested the application of Article 53 of the Turkish Penal Code, it can be concluded that the actions of the state party were intended as retaliation.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Daha ayrıntılı bilgiler için lütfen taraf devlete gönderilen 11 February 2026 tarihli, AL TUR 3/2026 referans numaralı komünikasyon dosyasını inceleyiniz.

<sup>2</sup> Kanunun tam metni için:

[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)

## F.b. AGAINST DEFNE GÜZEL

34. A criminal case has been filed against trans activist Defne Güzel—who is also known for her work on HIV—over the Turkish translation<sup>3</sup> of the book “MyIntersexStory”<sup>4</sup>, which addresses intersex issues and features intersex imagery, as well as the representation of trans women’s bodies in an art exhibition catalog<sup>5</sup>. Moreover, an expert report obtained during the investigation concluded that the association’s activities were not in violation of the law. The reason for directing the charges at Defne Güzel is that she serves as the president of the 17 May Association.<sup>6</sup>

## CONCLUSION

35. The exceptional measures taken in the first case point to strong indications of retaliation. The second case, meanwhile, is significant in that it reveals a broader pattern of repression targeting human rights defenders.
36. It is noteworthy that administrative audits and criminal proceedings were initiated against the relevant associations immediately following the period when the UN reporting activities mentioned above were most intensive.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.17mayis.org/images/publish/pdf/benim-intersekshikayem-10-05-2023.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.oiiurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/testimonial\\_broch\\_21-21cm\\_for\\_web.pdf](https://www.oiiurope.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/testimonial_broch_21-21cm_for_web.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.17mayis.org/images/publish/pdf/cocuklar-karacalar-cicekler-atesler-sergi-katalogu-09-12-2022.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> For more detailed information, please check the information sheet:

<https://kaosgl1.org/en/single-news/lawsuit-filed-seeking-prison-sentence-for-17-may-association-chair-defne-guzel>