

**VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST
THE LESBIAN, BISEXUAL AND TRANS WOMEN FROM TÜRKİYE**

Contribution to the Report of the Independent SOGI Expert

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Contact details: Kerem DİKMEN | Email: kerem.dikmen@kaosgl.org | Phone: +905322339351 | www.kaosgldernegi.org |

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 Situation¹

1. Kaos GL draws particular attention to the communications it has submitted to the UN over the past two years (UPR; treaty mechanisms and other communications) and has informed the Independent Expert of each one, and invites the Independent Expert to observe these reports.²
2. The 2024 Lesbian Human Rights Report published by Kaos GL includes a quote from an interviewee that gives a general idea: "Yesterday, for example, I went to a concert and kissed my partner, and I felt strange. Because we can only do this in certain places. I didn't experience any noticeable stares, but internally, we've learned to code our fear. Because it was my first time going there. We use certain places; you can't go to a fine-dining restaurant, for example. You go, but you definitely act like two close girlfriends."³

Legal and Political Framework

3. The ruling coalition has an agenda that aims to eliminate even the limited and ineffective guarantees for LGBT+ rights in the Constitution.⁴ The constitutional amendment proposal submitted in 2022, even if the approval process has not been completed, is the most important evidence of this.⁵ The Human Rights and Equality Institution of Türkiye (*HREIT*) systematically decides that complaints of violations by LGBTI+'s are "inadmissible." The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance drew attention to this situation in its latest review report published on June 12, 2025.⁶ In this report, ECRI recommended that discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity be included within the scope of HREIT's responsibilities.⁷ The report states that LGBT+'s are not equally protected under the

¹ The term "LBT" used in this report refers to lesbian, bisexual, and transgender women.

² Kaos GL, together with relevant UN mandates, submitted the following reports to the email address of the SOGI independent expert: On 09.12.2025, Submission of Report on Current Barriers in LGBTI+ Refugees' Access to the Right to Health in Türkiye//Confidential; On 21.11.2025, Freedom of Association of LGBT+ Organizations in Türkiye; On October 9, 2025, Kaos GL submitted a report titled "Submission on the Exclusion of Transgender Individuals in Türkiye from Sexual and Reproductive Health Services and Related Human Rights Violations." On September 29, 2025, Kaos GL submitted a report titled "Submission on Forced Medical Interventions on Intersex Children in Türkiye." Additionally, it submitted submissions to the Committee Against Torture (2024), the Human Rights Committee for the review of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (2024), and the Human Rights Committee for universal periodic review (2024), either independently or as a coalition member.

³ <https://kaosgldernegi.org/images/library/lezbi-yenleri-n-i-nsan-haklari-raporu-2.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.duvarenglish.com/akp-plans-to-shut-down-lgbti-associations-in-turkey-with-constitutional-amendment-proposal-news-62619>

⁵ <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/erdogan-says-constitutional-change-will-protect-families-against-perverse-trends-2022-10-31/>

⁶ <https://rm.coe.int/sixth-report-on-turkiye/1680b65698> (Page 6)

⁷ <https://rm.coe.int/sixth-report-on-turkiye/1680b65698>

law.⁸ Similar concerns were expressed by the Council in the CCPR review.⁹ In Türkiye's latest universal periodic review, it is possible to observe the exclusionary structure of national institutions towards LGBT+'s in the recommendations made by countries.¹⁰ The discrimination clause in the Turkish Penal Code does not cover LGBT+'s. This situation has been recommended for review in Türkiye's latest review.¹¹ In 2025, there were two legislative initiatives to criminalize LGBT+'s.¹²

4. Official policies are anti-LGBTI+. At a forum, which began on May 22, the President declared the 2026-2035 period as the "Decade of Family and Population."¹³ In his speech on 20.11.2025, Erdoğan said, "We are taking all necessary measures against impositions such as gender neutralization and deviant movements such as LGBT, and we are not allowing even the slightest concession, negligence, or complacency in this regard."¹⁴
5. The Ministry of Family and Social Policies (Hereinafter referred to as "the Ministry") is the executive body responsible for implementing and enforcing public institutions' anti-LGBT policies in Türkiye. The Vision Document and Action Plan for the Protection and Strengthening of the Family serves as the fundamental reference text for these policies.¹⁵
6. The document in question says nothing about the measures that need to be taken in response to the increasing number of women being killed and subjected to violence within their families in Türkiye. It does not address the frequent cases of domestic sexual abuse or child, early, and forced marriages as a problem, while viewing childbirth at an early age and taking care of the elderly, disabled, and children as a woman's "natural" duty. One of the references in the document published by the Ministry is the 12th Development Plan. The concept of "harmful trends" in the 12th Development Plan provides a basis for the ministry's hostility towards LGBTI+ people. The Ministry is not the only institution that includes LGBT+ hostility in its documents.

⁸ Para 24

⁹ (CCPR/C/TUR/CO/2, para 13, 14)

<https://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=TKc6NEAPKCPOom%2B2ViVj%2Bm9U1oaFuvR1LjWKKxQDp%2FeA1Z0MxMEbUdS7t8uBSnafpcwYOYT4kh88lf3lfAhAOA%3D%3D>

¹⁰ 40.311 Canada; 40.315 Finland

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

¹² <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/10/turkiye-leaked-proposals-that-would-criminalize-lgbti-people-must-never-see-the-light-of-day/>

¹³ <https://kaosgl.org/en/single-news/erdogan-targeted-lgbti-individuals-at-the-international-family-forum-and-declared-the-2026-2035-period-as-the-decade-of-family-and-population>

¹⁴ <https://www.aile.gov.tr/haberler/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-ve-aile-ve-sosyal-hizmetler-bakanimiz-goktas-aile-ve-kultur-sanat-sempozyumu-kapanis-oturumuna-katildi/>

¹⁵ <https://www.aile.gov.tr/media/165130/ailenin-korunmasi-ve-gu-c-lendirilmesi-vizyon-belgesi-ve-eylem-plani.pdf>

7. The Strategic Plan prepared by the Presidency of Religious Affairs, which is affiliated with the Presidency, also clearly reveals LGBT+ hostility and the resources allocated to this hostility.¹⁶

Gender Norms and Heteronormativity

8. Gender norms have been shaped based on the assumption that society consists of cisgender heterosexual women and men, and this situation has directly determined legal norms as a superstructure institution. Marriage is legally defined as being between a woman and a man, and civil partnerships are not regulated. This automatically excludes LGBTs from partner-related rights (such as inheritance and social security). Heteronormative structures within care and social services in Türkiye limit LGBTI+ women's access to childcare, healthcare including sexual and reproductive health, elderly care, and social support services, preventing them from receiving the necessary services and, thus, leading to a decrease in their quality of life.¹⁷

Invisibility, Silencing, and Erasure

9. In national action plans, the term “woman” used in gender policies and family policies directly refers to heterosexual women and views women not as a social identity but as a spouse in the family or the mother of children, treating them as objects to be protected. The Ministry has sent directives to provincial governors' offices instructing them not to use words such as “gender” in correspondence.¹⁸ There is no disaggregated data on LBTs in public statistics. Consequently, there is a lack of data specific to LBTs in key areas such as violence, health, and employment. Care services and the health system are structured based on heterosexual women.¹⁹
10. Research shows that public policies forcing LBT's to become invisible also have consequences in other areas. In Kaos GL's latest report, the percentage of participants who stated that they were completely open about their gender identity, sexual orientation, and gender characteristics at their place of work was found to be 4%.²⁰ The report reveals that there are significant barriers to LGBT+ visibility in the private sector

¹⁶Excerpted from the report titled “Lesbian Maneuvering in the Year of the Family” published by the Bursa Free Colors Association. The full Turkish report is available at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GbM0sMHUJkBcCIFd4s1DEDJgiOD6Kno2/view>

¹⁷<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/women/cfis/care-support/subm-mandate-wg-cso-kaos-gl.docx>

¹⁸<https://kaosgl.org/en/single-news/a-34-warning-34-from-the-ministry-of-family-to-its-directorates-against-lgbti-do-not-use-the-concepts-of-gender-gender-identity-or-sexual-orientation>

¹⁹<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/issues/women/cfis/care-support/subm-mandate-wg-cso-kaos-gl.docx>

²⁰ <https://kaosgldernegi.org/images/library/public-2025.pdf>, page 5.

Psychological, Economic, Social Violence

14. Discrimination faced by LBT's in accessing employment and within the workplace creates a heightened state of economic vulnerability. The fact that 64.3% of LGBTI+'s who are able to access employment do not hold managerial positions clearly demonstrates that access to employment does not necessarily translate into economic freedom under all circumstances. This situation can also lead to dependency on the assigned family, resulting in an increased risk of domestic violence. Informal employment constitutes both a form of insecurity and a manifestation of economic violence. Unlike heterosexual women, LBT's are unable to benefit from partner-based social security mechanisms, further reinforcing this cycle of economic violence.
15. In 2021, President Erdoğan addressed the audience at his party's women's branches congress as follows: "Let's not worry about what lesbians and their like say. Let's look at our mothers. The pillar of the family is the mother. We will walk confidently to the future with our mothers". This rhetoric, expressed at the highest level of the state, not only reinforces the perception of impunity among perpetrators but also produces a similar result for violence in the social sphere. This is because LBT's are considered a threat to the family. Kaos GL has obtained an unpublished report from the Ministry that reveals how LGBT+ rights are targeted through social programs.²⁷
16. The experiences shared in the Lesbian Human Rights Report published by Kaos GL reveal the consequences of exclusion supported by state policies in the social sphere.²⁸

Hate Crimes

17. Turkish Penal Code, Article 122, stipulates that obstructing the sale of goods or services; the leasing of property; the sale of property; hiring; or participation in a regular activity with the intent to incite hatred shall be punished with imprisonment for a term of one to three years.²⁹ However, since SOGI is not specified in the article, committing these acts against LGBTI+'s is not a crime.³⁰

²⁷<https://kaosgl1.org/en/single-news/ministry-of-family-prioritises-attacking-lgbti-s-over-fighting-poverty-report-shows>

²⁸One participant described the ordinariness of violence: "My partner and I were walking hand in hand after leaving a bar when we were harassed by a man. We took refuge at a taxi stand." Another participant described the unnamed circle: "I had to work in the countryside. Things are much more difficult in the countryside. You can never be yourself. You might be able to create a narrow circle in the countryside too, but there's no space outside where you can be yourself, where you can nourish yourself in any way. Who can live within four walls?"

<https://kaosgl1.org/images/library/lezbi-yenleri-n-i-nsan-haklari-raporu-2.pdf>

²⁹ [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)

³⁰ This situation is also the subject of some of the recommendations made to Türkiye during the Universal Periodic Review. (See section 2.1 of this contribution.)

18. According to the results shared in Kaos GL's 2023 hate crime survey conducted through questionnaires, 7 victims of hate crimes were physically injured; 20 were found to have experienced psychological problems such as fear, anxiety, shame, and suicidal thoughts after the incident.³¹
19. Kaos GL's latest report also revealed similar findings.³² According to the report, hate crimes against LGBT+'s are on the rise in Türkiye. At least five violations of the right to life occurred last year, three of which were recorded as hate crimes. In addition, 21 detentions, 24 cases of torture and ill-treatment, and 27 violations of personal integrity were reported.³³
20. Trans women, among other LGBTI+'s, face extraordinary and high costs when purchasing or renting property, thereby limiting their right to housing. Systematic discrimination and inequality of opportunity stemming from existing gender inequalities in Türkiye have demonstrated that lesbians are unable to access housing on an equal basis. Lesbians living alone or with a partner of the same assigned gender, lesbian sex workers, lesbians living alone with their children, lesbians living in poverty, lesbians who are survivors of domestic violence, lesbian refugees, etc., face numerous violations and obstacles in terms of housing. According to the Poverty Report by the 17 May Association: "Sealing the homes of trans women on the grounds that they are sex workers is a practice frequently resorted to by law enforcement agencies."³⁴

Digital Spaces

21. The Radio and Television Supreme Council imposes heavy fines on radio and television channels that make LGBTI+s visible on their screens and broadcast them on their platforms.³⁵ RTÜK, a state institution, fueled hatred in the digital sphere as well as the physical sphere by ensuring that the call-to-action video for anti-LGBTI+ rallies organized in 2022 and subsequent years was broadcast as a public service announcement on radio and television.³⁶

³¹ Seven LGBT+ individuals who were victims of hate crimes suffered physical injuries; 20 experienced psychological problems such as fear, anxiety, shame, and suicidal thoughts after the incident. According to the report, the perpetrators in 5 cases were family members, while the perpetrators in 7 cases were civilians unknown to the victims. The perpetrators in 3 cases were school friends, while the perpetrators in 1 case were work colleagues. The report noted that only 2 of the 27 hate crime cases were reported to the police.

<https://kaosgldernegi.org/images/library/nefret-suc-lari-2023-raporu-1.pdf>

³² <https://kaosgldernegi.org/images/library/lgbt-s-human-rights-2024-report-mini.pdf>

³³ <https://www.dw.com/tr/kaos-gl-toplumda-g%C3%B6r%C3%BCn%C3%BCr-olma-m%C3%BCcadelesi/a-73037729#:~:text=Kaos%20GL'nin%202024%20%C4%B0nsan,ki%C5%9Fisel%20b%C3%BCt%C3%BCnl%C3%BCk%20ihlali%20rapor%20edildi>

³⁴ <https://www.17mayis.org/images/publish/pdf/ayrimciliktan-yoksulluga-turkiye-de-lgbti-lar-27-09-2022.pdf>

³⁵ <https://bianet.org/haber/rtuk-fines-streaming-platforms-orders-removal-of-films-over-anti-family-content-311665>

³⁶ <https://www.duvarenglish.com/turkeys-media-watchdog-to-support-anti-lgbti-rally-news-62966>

Freedom of Expression and Assembly

22. Peaceful gatherings often mark the starting point for torture and ill-treatment directed at LBT's. Police who attacked the "Youth on the Move" march on April 2025, in Ankara detained a trans woman after torturing her.³⁷ Following the violent images reflected on social media, the governor's office defended the torture by referring to the victim as a "so-called woman."³⁸ On March 8, 2025, at least 11 people were detained at the March 8 rally held in Kadıköy, Istanbul. According to a statement by the Istanbul Bar Association, one of those detained was a lawyer. Police intervened during a speech made on behalf of Trans Pride, preventing the unfurling of a rainbow flag.³⁹ Restrictions on symbols have long been one of the primary justifications for excluding LBT's from public spaces. Flag bans at universities were among the most notable violations in 2025. LBT students were subjected to violence at universities for carrying flags, their activities were banned, or investigations were launched against them.⁴⁰ A woman who came to the trial of those prosecuted for participating in the 2025 Istanbul Pride March was not allowed into the courthouse because the word "lesbian" was written on her t-shirt.⁴¹ However, carrying symbols and flags is not the only reason for violations of freedom of expression against LBTs. At an exhibition in Istanbul, two pieces of artwork, including a visual with the words "Trans murders are political" and a rainbow flag, were deemed inappropriate and banned.⁴² It is no secret that LBT or supporting artists have been censored by the Ministry of Culture.⁴³ A censorship decision was issued by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies regarding a novel that addresses topics such as mother-daughter relationships, love, and "fluid sexual identity." The decision was published in the Official Gazette.⁴⁴ RTÜK fined the film All of Us Strangers for its depiction of lesbianism.⁴⁵

³⁷ <https://kaosgl.org/haber/ankara-valiligi-polis-iskencesini-transfobiyle-savundu>

³⁸ <https://x.com/AnkaraValiligi/status/1915898344423014825?s=20> (The following statements are noteworthy in the explanation: It has been determined that some press and social media outlets have published images showing "male police officers arresting a 'so-called woman' while part of her body is visible.")

³⁹ <https://medyascope.tv/2025/03/08/8-martta-kadinlara-ankarada-engelleme-istanbulda-11-gozalti/>

⁴⁰ <https://t24.com.tr/haber/koc-universitesi-nde-8-ogrenciye-gokkusagi-merdiven-ve-katil-israil-yazisi-sorusturmasi,1244477>

<https://t24.com.tr/haber/ytu-de-guvenlikten-protostocu-ogrencilere-sert-mudahale-elimizdeki-lgbti-bayraklarini-toplumu-rahatsiz-ediyor-diyerek-zorla-aldilar,1233351>

<https://kaosgl.org/haber/universitelerde-gokkusagi-bayraklarina-saldiri-lubunyalar-mucadelesini-surdurecek>

<https://t24.com.tr/haber/bogazici-universitesi-nde-ogrencilerin-boyadigi-gokkusagi-merdivene-ozel-guvenlik-engeli-biz-onlara-renklerle-gelirken-onlar-bize-griligi-layik-goruyorlar,1243205>

<https://kaosgl.org/haber/mimar-sinan-da-lgbti-bayragina-yasak-iddiasıyla-saldiri>

⁴¹ <https://www.odatv.com/guncel/istanbul-onur-yuruyusu-davasi-lezbiyen-tisortuyle-adliyeye-alinmadi-120110141>

⁴² <https://bianet.org/haber/12-barikat-sergisine-polis-engeli-17-esere-el-konuldu-307953>

⁴³ <https://www.sabah.com.tr/yazarlar/gunaydin/tuba-kalcik/2025/06/13/sebep-siyasi-degil-ahlaki> (The pro-government newspaper published an article stating: "I investigated the news. According to information I obtained from sources close to the Ministry, I learned that the incident was definitely not political and that the concerts were not approved because some artists support LGBT and perform LGBT shows on stage.")

⁴⁴ <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/ilanlar/eskiilanlar/2025/06/20250627-4-3.pdf>

⁴⁵ <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/gundem/rtukten-milli-ve-manevi-degerlere-aykirlilik-gerekcesiyle-5-dijital-platforma-ceza/3691553>

23. Nearly all peaceful gatherings involving LBTs were banned or effectively blocked. Women were detained during a feminist night march.⁴⁶ LBTs who participated in protests against the arrest of the mayor of Istanbul were detained and subjected to strip searches. Even protesting this was prevented by the police.⁴⁷

Discrimination in Access to Health Care

24. LBT's face widespread discrimination in accessing healthcare based on their sexual orientation and gender identity. Healthcare workers' prejudiced attitudes prevent LBT's from receiving the healthcare services they need and negatively impact their mental health. This situation causes LBT's to avoid healthcare institutions and only seek healthcare services when their health problems become severe.
25. Research shows that a significant proportion of lesbian and bisexual women avoid seeking healthcare due to fear of discrimination. When they do access healthcare, it is often observed that healthcare providers focus on patients' sexual orientation and fail to adequately consider critical risk factors such as sexual history and history of sexual violence. This approach increases the risk of misdiagnosis and inadequate treatment.⁴⁸
26. Kaos GL's "Gynecology Talks" studies, published since 2017, show that lesbian, bisexual, and trans women are subjected to discrimination, mistreatment, and rights violations during gynecological examinations. These experiences undermine LBT's trust in the healthcare system and lead to treatments being discontinued or women abandoning healthcare services altogether.⁴⁹

Trans Women's Right to Health and Restrictions on Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT)

27. HRT for trans women is an integral part of their right to health. However, access to HRT has long been restricted by legal, administrative, and economic barriers. This situation has been exacerbated by recent judicial packages and administrative practices.
28. On 20.11.2024, the Turkish Medicines and Medical Devices Agency imposed indefinite restrictions and quotas on essential medications used in HRT, such as testosterone, estrogen, and GnRH analogues. This measure effectively prevents trans women, who

⁴⁶<https://t24.com.tr/haber/kadinlar-ve-lgbti-lar-23-feminist-gece-yuruyusu-icin-taksim-de-aile-sizin-isyan-bizim--,1224448>

⁴⁷ <https://bianet.org/haber/feministlerden-gozaltinda-taciz-ciplak-arama-protestosu-failler-cezalandirilsin-306188>

⁴⁸ Guide to Care for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Trans Patients
<https://kaosgldernegi.org/images/library/saglik.pdf>

⁴⁹ <https://kaosgldernegi.org/images/library/2020jinekolog-muhabbetleri-son.pdf>

are particularly dependent on the public health system, from accessing hormone therapy; interrupting treatment poses serious physical and mental health risks.

Refugees

29. Refugees face structural barriers stemming from their status, in addition to discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Language barriers, lack of information about the healthcare system, and the absence of specialized healthcare services in the city of residence severely limit access to healthcare. This situation poses critical risks, particularly in terms of chronic illnesses and the healthcare needs of trans refugees during their transition process.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ <https://kaosgldernegi.org/images/library/2019lgbti-multecilereng-web.pdf>