

DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLATIONS OF RIGHTS AGAINST LGBTI+ IN UNIVERSITIES

For The Year 2022





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For The Year 2022**

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1. Introduction

During our study, in which we monitored state universities in Ankara and Istanbul in the context of LGBTI+ rights in 2021-2022, we also made contact with students and academics from other universities. One of the primary observations we made during these conversations was that the discrimination and rights violations we focused on throughout our study were also experienced by many LGBTI+ students and academics across various universities. In light of this realization, we set out to create an annual report to complement our existing monitoring studies, which primarily focus on universities and employ both quantitative and structural approaches.

This report will serve as the first of our periodic reports, which we plan to produce in the future. It aims to monitor the LGBTI+ rights violations that occurred in universities in 2022 with a rights-based perspective. Our study utilized a holistic approach that involved tracking rights violations reported in the media, examining legal and academic support applications received by the ÜniKuir Association, and analyzing the responses to the “Report A Violation of Right and Discrimination in Universities” form. All of these aspects are covered in the report to provide a comprehensive overview of the issue.

As the ÜniKuir Association, we remain committed to our rights-based monitoring activities aimed at protecting the rights of LGBTI+ individuals at universities and combatting discrimination. Our goal is to promote equal access to rights and ensure safer campus environments not only for LGBTI+ individuals but for all members of the university community.

In this context, we would like to thank LGBTI+’s, who contributed with their experience, expertise, and opinions to both our reporting and advocacy efforts, participated in the meetings and also became a part of the solidarity, for their support.

Good reading!

1.1. On the Method

As we planned our reporting on rights violations and discrimination in universities, one critical issue we focused on was identifying the best data collection approach. In order to provide a more comprehensive analysis of the situation and inform our advocacy efforts, we have decided to employ a case-based monitoring methodology in this report, which will support our indicator-based monitoring of *Gender Equality in the Context of LGBTI+ Rights in Universities* and allow us to track developments over time. Our case study involved the use of both qualitative and quantitative data collection forms to gather information on the rights violations and discriminations that LGBTI+ individuals encounter at universities. We collected qualitative data through follow-up of cases reported in the media and conducted focus group interviews. Additionally, we gathered quantitative data from legal and academic sources, including data provided by the ÜniKuir Association and the *Discrimination and Violation of Rights in Universities Reporting Form* which was created by us in January 2022 and remained open for one year. We did not include the violations in the case follow-up in the Legal and Academic support data of the ÜniKuir Association and the data obtained through the responses to the form.

The Political Participation and Advocacy Program conducted a case follow-up compilation to report on rights violations affecting universities and LGBTI+ students, as reflected in the media. The aim of this effort was to develop policies and produce advocacy material. When conducting our case analysis, we categorized the cases brought up by university communities and young LGBTI+ individuals on digital media into five headings. The right to not be subjected to discriminatory treatment and violence, hate speech, freedom of expression, freedom of association, and freedom of assembly (event) and demonstration. We have compiled cases where individual or collective actions of university administrations or members have affected LGBTI+ individuals under the heading of the right not to be subjected to discriminatory treatment and violence; cases where university administrations, members, and stakeholders have spread or legitimized hate speech against LGBTI+ individuals under the heading of hate speech; cases where the right of LGBTI+s to form and disseminate their thoughts are intervened through disciplinary

investigation or judicial harassment under the heading of freedom of expression; cases involving targeting, judicial harassment, and obstruction against LGBTI+ student groups and associations under the heading of the freedom of association; and cases involving prohibition, obstruction, or restriction encountered by LGBTI+ organizations' events or Pride Marches they want to organize on campuses under the heading of freedom of assembly and demonstration.”

When it comes to LGBTI+ individuals, there are many reasons why incidents of violence and discrimination may not be reported in the media. These include the belief that the incident is not newsworthy or may be ignored, a lack of knowledge about reporting mechanisms, fear that the case will remain unresolved if reported publicly, and concerns about revealing the identity of those involved and potentially causing further violations and discrimination. It is a well-known fact that there are cases of violence and discrimination that are not reflected in the media. At this point, we conducted focus group discussions with the rights holders in cases that we were aware of through our fieldwork, whether they were reflected in the news or not. We conducted focus group discussions with 15 students from 14 universities located in Ankara, Antalya, Aydın, Istanbul, Izmir, Mardin, Mugla, Sakarya, and Yalova. During these discussions, we asked questions about various aspects of campus life, including events organized by students, disciplinary investigations, scholarship and credit cuts, evictions from dormitories, university regulations and practices, as well as the attitudes of and relationships between students and university personnel such as private security officers, administrative staff, and service providers.

Given the various reasons that hinder access to data on violations of rights against LGBTI+ individuals in universities, as well as the discrimination and violence they face, such as inadequate or malfunctioning complaint mechanisms, or the reservations of the right holders, the data provided by LGBTI+ associations through their contacts with individuals and the support mechanisms they offer to clients provide us with a broader framework for the violations experienced, compared to the data reflected in the media or published by state institutions where LGBTI+s are not visible. Therefore, we also used the support services provided by ÜniKuir Association and the reports from the rights holders as a data source. We anticipated that the legal support applications made to the association throughout 2022 would form a significant part of this report, as they

include cases of human rights violations and discrimination against LGBTI+ individuals in universities. While there is significant support available for postgraduate applications, national and international scholarships, and research processes for LGBTI+ individuals within the scope of academic support, interviews conducted with academics and students in 2022 revealed concerns related to issues affecting LGBTI+ individuals in universities, such as the need for safe spaces, hate speech in classes, sexual harassment, and mobbing. As a result, we have decided to include these issues in our reporting, in addition to providing legal support data.

Through the form we made available in January 2022, we were able to receive reports of 49 cases of human rights violations from 30 different universities located in Adana, Ankara, Istanbul, Kayseri, Kirikkale, Konya, and Samsun. After receiving responses regarding the reported violations, we have categorized the incidents at universities into 8 different titles: Prevention of Academic Activity, Discriminatory Discourse, Discrimination, Disclosure of Gender and Gender Identity, Prevention of Freedom of Expression; Hate Speech; Prevention of Student Community Activities; Harassment, Mobbing, Threat of Violence. The data obtained through the form also provided information about the perpetrators of the violations, whether a complaint was made or not, and the reasons why the individuals whose rights were violated did not file a complaint.

2. Case Tracking in the Media: Rights of LGBTI+s with University

The Political Participation and Advocacy Program conducted a case follow-up compilation to report on rights violations affecting universities and LGBTI+ students, as reflected in the media. The aim of this effort was to develop policies and produce advocacy material. For case analysis, we examined the cases brought up by university communities and young LGBTI+s in digital media, and gathered them under 5 headings: The right to not be subjected to discriminatory treatment and violence, hate speech, freedom of expression, freedom of association, and freedom of assembly (event) and demonstration

2.1. The Right to be Free from Discrimination and Violence

In 2022, during graduation ceremonies of medical faculties in some universities such as Istanbul¹ and Selcuk², the term ‘sexual orientation’ in the medical oath was censored. While the graduates of Capa Medical Faculty broke through censorship during the oath, the lights in the hall were turned off and the stage curtain was closed when the graduates of Selcuk Medical Faculty recited the actual medical oath. The Turkish Medical Association, on the other hand, has reacted to some universities making changes to the medical oath.³

1 <https://www.unikuir.org/haberler/universite-cinsel-yoneliimi-sildi-ogrenciler-hipokrat-yemini-sirasinda-sansuru-deldi-22-06-2022>

2 <https://www.birgun.net/haber/selcuk-universitesi-nde-ogrenciler-orjinal-hekimlik-andi-ni-okurken-isiklar-sonduruldu-perde-kapatildi-393999>

3 <https://yesilgazete.org/tip-fakultelerindeki-hekimlik-andi-birer-birer-degisiyor-cinsel-yonelim-vurgusu-yok-kurtaj-karsitligi-besleniyor/>

2.2. Hate Speech

In 2022, hate rallies and marches targeting LGBTI+ individuals and advocacy for their rights were organized under the name of “family gathering” in many cities in Turkey. In these hate marches and rallies, LGBTI+ student clubs in universities have also been targeted, and it has been said that these clubs will be shut down.⁴In addition, members of parliament, mayors, public officials such as directors and muftis, as well as rectors and faculty members have also participated in these rallies or marches in cities such as Trabzon⁵, İzmir⁶, and Mardin⁷. Some academics have even supported the organization of hate events by actively participating in “family platforms”.⁸

It was reported in the press that a call poster for an anti-LGBTI+ hate rally organized by the İzmir Great Family Platform was hung in a dormitory affiliated with the Ministry of Youth and Sports in İzmir.⁹

2.3. Freedom of Expression

During the 2021 graduation ceremony of the Faculty of Literature at Dokuz Eylül University, two students wearing masks that read “Istanbul Convention Saves Lives!” and holding a bi+ flag were subjected to an attack by private security guards¹⁰After the incident, disciplinary proceedings were opened against the students, not the

4 <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/470419/lgbti-karsiti-mitingden-notlar-bugun-bu-isin-fitili-ateslendi>

5 <https://onedio.com/haber/trabzon-da-henuz-vakit-varken-ailene-sahip-cik-yuruyusu-yapildi-yuruyuse-milletvekili-ve-rektor-katildi-1105145>

6 <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/turkiye/izmirde-lgbt-karsiti-mitinge-iki-rektor-il-milli-egitim-muduru-ve-il-muftusu-katildi-2000358>

7 <https://www.mardinlife.com/mardinliler-aile-icin-meydanlara-indi.html>

8 <https://kaosgl.org/haber/lgbti-larin-yurumesi-yasak-lgbti-dusmani-nefret-yuruyusu-serbest> ; <https://kaosgl.org/haber/konya-da-belediye-baskani-ve-milletvekili-esliginde-lgbti-dusmani-nefret-yuruyusu>

9 <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/siyaset/ogrenciler-tepkili-kyk-yurduna-lgbti-karsiti-afis-2000050>

10 <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/turkiye/izmir-dokuz-eylul-universitesinde-istanbul-sozlesmesi-alerjisi-1872933>

private security guards, and they were given a reprimand penalty.¹¹ Koç University Student Dean's Office rejected the festival poster of the Queer Club, considering it "pornographic." However, it is known that the Sevgi Gönül Cultural Center (SGKM), which is affiliated with the Student Dean's Office, had previously used a similar image. In addition, the students stated that this decision was not communicated to them in writing, and they only found out about it when they asked.¹² However, as a result of the club's struggle, the ban on the poster was lifted before the festival started.¹³

Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor's Office has prepared an indictment for "publicly insulting the National Anthem" due to an e-mail sent to the members of the Boğaziçi LGBTİA+ Studies Club in 2019. In the indictment, it was claimed that *Lubunca* (Turkey's LGBT slang) was an insult. It is known that the student who was sued has received death threats.¹⁴ The ongoing trial, which started in 2022, remains unresolved and is still in progress.

Due to the accumulation of riot police forces on the campus of Aydın Adnan Menderes University, the planned protests in response to the suicide of university student Enes Kara, who couldn't bear the pressures he faced at a religious order dormitory, have been canceled. In response to this, students expressed their dissatisfaction within the classrooms, but they were detained by private security guards, and three individuals, including LGBTİ+ rights advocates, were arrested. After being released following their statements, the students were subsequently charged with the crime of insulting the President, leading to a legal case being filed against them.¹⁵ However, the court of first instance acquitted him on the grounds that the act was within the scope of freedom of expression. Due to the Deputy President's application to the appellate court against the decision, the ruling of the Izmir Regional Court of Justice is awaited.

11 <https://www.unikuir.org/haberler/istanbul-sozlesmesi-maskesi-takan-ve-bi-bayragi-acan-ogrenciye-universiteden-ceza-21-01-2022>

12 <https://www.unikuir.org/haberler/universite-yonetimi-penise-benziyor-diye-koc-kuir-in-etkinlik-afisini-reddetti-19-05-2022>

13 <https://www.unikuir.org/haberler/koc-universitesi-39-ndeki-kuir-festivalde-afis-engeli-kalkti-25-05-2022>

14 <https://kaosgl.org/haber/savci-lubuncayi-hakaret-saydi-olum-tehditleri-olan-ogrenciye-bir-de-dava-acildi>

15 <https://kaosgl.org/haber/sessiz-kalma-hikmet-hazer>

2.4. Freedom of Association

During the protests that took place at Boğaziçi University following the appointment of Melih Bulu as the trustee rector, the Boğaziçi University LGBTI+ Studies Club was repeatedly targeted for an extended period of time. Among those who made statements against the club were Interior Minister Süleyman Soylu, the Istanbul Governorship, and the spokesperson of the Republican People's Party (CHP), Faik Öztrak. During this process, on February 1, 2021, the club was closed by the decision of the trustee rector. Presidential Communications Director Fahrettin Altun announced the decision on his Twitter account.¹⁶ In his statement, Fahrettin Altun claimed that “the university administration had taken a legitimate action against those who were attempting to trample upon sacred values” by referring to BÜLGBTİA+ (Boğaziçi University LGBTI+ Studies Club).

The club members have applied to the administrative court, requesting the annulment of the decision to close the club made by the Rectorate. However, the 11th Administrative Court of Istanbul has rejected the case. The court justified its decision by stating that the closure of the club, which was prompted by the targeting of the club and the Boğaziçi Resistance, as well as the initiation of a criminal investigation and trial, could not be interpreted as a mere club closure. However, the court overlooked the fact that the ongoing investigation and trial had not yet reached a conclusion, thus disregarding the principle of presumption of innocence, the evidence in favor of the club, and the failure to follow the steps outlined in the Boğaziçi University Student Activities Bylaw before making the decision to close the club. The club expressed on social media that they would exercise their right to appeal the decision through the appellate court, emphasizing that “We are not just in one club, but in every club”.¹⁷ We are awaiting the decision of the Istanbul Regional Administrative Court for the legal process to reach its conclusion.

¹⁶ https://twitter.com/fahrettinaltun/status/1356376069557907456?ref_src=twsrc%5Ftfw%7Ctwcamp%5Ftweetembed%7Ctwterm%5F1356376069557907456%7Ctwgr%5F%7Ctw-con%5Fes1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.ajanshaber.com.tr%2Fbogazici-lgbt-kulubu-kapatildi-haber-469333

¹⁷ <https://twitter.com/bogazicilGBTIA/status/1514166233129758725?s=20&t=v4CcTtDccruOYRnQp81l6g>

Aydınlık Newspaper¹⁸, Türkiye Gençlik Birliği¹⁹ (Youth Union of Turkey), Vatan Partisi (Patriotic Party)²⁰, Ulusal Kanal (the National Channel)²¹ and Üsküdar University²² have collectively targeted both ÜniKuir and SPoD, as well as their joint project that monitors and reports on LGBTI+ rights within state universities in Ankara and Istanbul. Patriotic Party's Leading Youth Secretary General, İbrahim Toraman, appeared in front of the cameras and made a press statement regarding this issue, utilizing provocative language. In his statement, Toraman targeted LGBTI+ individuals and advocacy activities, using words such as “attack,” “decay,” “imposition,” “civil societies pawns of imperialists,” “nonsense, lies,” and “enemies of science and humanity.” These words contain elements of hate, derogation, and stigmatization. Describing a legitimate advocacy work as an attack, Toraman said in his statement, “It is part of the defense of the homeland to shield our chests against this comprehensive attack, indecent attack, to protect our children, moral values, social structure and family, and our national identity.” At the same time, he demanded that the grants received by LGBTI+ organizations under the supervision of governors and ministries be cut, associations be closed, and obstruction of association in universities.

In addition to that, İbrahim Toraman targeted ÜniKuir Association's General Coordinator Ozgur Gur by using his name and making reference to the Freedom from Fear Award he received from the Roosevelt Foundation. In its news article about the press statement, Aydınlık Newspaper obtained opinions from six “experts”. The individuals providing opinions under the title of “experts” have supported statements that are contrary to human rights norms, science, ethics, and facts. Üsküdar University has published Aydınlık's news article, which includes the opinions of its Rector, Prof. Dr. Nevzat Tarhan, on its official website.

Kuir ADÜ Student Club, organized by students at Aydın Adnan Menderes University, has been targeted in a local online news site under the headline “Not Suitable for ADÜ!”²³ Following this news, the University

18 <https://www.aydinlik.com.tr/haber/universitelerde-ab-fonlariyla-lgbt-projesi-324861>

19 <https://tgb.gen.tr/turkiye/devlet-universitelerine-lgbt-dayatmasi-32065>

20 <https://twitter.com/OncuGenclik/status/1543905685393620992?s=20&t=Evsj91ZHWbuZt3m6G2h7bg>

21 <https://www.ulusal.com.tr/video/11316945/oncu-genclik-universitelerde-lgbt-projesine-geciti-yok>

22 <https://uskudar.edu.tr/tr/icerik/8128/devlet-universitelerine-lgbt-dayatmasi>

23 <https://ajansaydin.com/aduye-yakismiyor-bu-sefer-lgbt-ile-gundemde-17487h.htm> (The news that was accessible in September has been subsequently removed.)

Administration has filed a criminal complaint with the prosecutor's office, alleging that the official name and logo of the university were being used by an unofficial group. Thereupon, a student whose involvement was identified by the authorities was called in for questioning regarding the accusation of trademark infringement. The investigation is still ongoing, and no final outcome has been reached yet.

2.5. Freedom of Assembly (Event) and Demonstration

9th Boğaziçi Pride March was scheduled to take place on May 20, 2022, starting at 17:00 at the South Campus Square. However, the Boğaziçi University Rectorate announced a ban on outdoor events by sending an email to its members at 16:19 on the same day.²⁴ The peaceful march, however, was subjected to intervention first by private security personnel and later by riot police and security branch officers. The police intervention, which took place in violation of the provisions of Law No. 2911 on Meetings and Demonstrations, resulted in the arrest of 70 individuals. During the arrests, numerous individuals were subjected to physical assault and placed in restraining positions, including the use of reverse handcuffing. Pride Marches On Campuses Report For The Year 2022 prepared by ÜniKuir provides detailed information about the human rights violations that took place during this march and the subsequent developments.

10. METU Pride March was planned to be held on 10 June 2022 at METU Campus. However, METU Rectorate has announced the ban on the Pride March through an email sent to its members.²⁵ Despite the reactions that lasted for 3 days, the Rectorate did not retract its decision. On June 10th, people gathered on the campus for the Pride March, and the march began. However, after a while, riot police and security officers entered the campus and intervened in the march.²⁶ The police intervention, which took place in violation of the provisions of Law No. 2911 on Meetings and Demonstrations, resulted in the detention of 38 individuals. Several individuals were subjected to physical assault and

²⁴ <https://www.unikuir.org/haberler/polis-9-bogazici-onur-yuruyusune-saldirdi-20-05-2022>

²⁵ <https://www.unikuir.org/haberler/odtu-rektorlugu-onur-yuruyusu-nu-yaptirmayacagini-acikladi-07-06-2022>

²⁶ <https://www.unikuir.org/haberler/rektorluk-yasakladi-odtu-de-polis-yine-onur-yuruyusu-ne-saldirdi-10-06-2022>

placed in reverse handcuffs during the detention process. For detailed information regarding the human rights violations during this march and the subsequent developments, the Pride Marches On Campuses Report For The Year 2022 by ÜniKuir Association can be consulted.

The Istanbul University Equality Student Club announced a vegan picnic to be held at the Beyazit Campus. However, it was targeted through social media accounts, including those of Istanbul University AKP Organization²⁷ and Istanbul University Young Thought Student Club²⁸, stating that the picnic would not be allowed to take place. The student club announced that they would hold the picnic with a statement on its social media account and called for solidarity.²⁹

However, when the time for the picnic came, a counter-group gathered in front of the Faculty of Communication, chanting discriminatory slogans, making threats, and shouting religious chants. As the threats from the group continued without police intervention, the Equality Student Club announced the cancellation of the event due to security concerns. They also called for participants who had planned to attend the event to leave the area and advised against forming groups. A group of LGBTI+ individuals who wished to exercise their right to peaceful assembly by staying on campus were first surrounded by the police and then taken into custody under the pretext of “we will take you to a safe place.” The 26 individuals who were taken into custody were released after providing their statements at the Istanbul Police Department Security Branch Directorate and undergoing health checks.³⁰

The “Climate Crisis, Gender and Sexual Health – Queer Ecology and Ecofeminism” panel organized by METU Environmental Society on June 17 with the participation of METU LGBTIQAA+ Solidarity, Young Approaches to Health Association and May 17 Association was canceled by the rectorate.³¹The society proceeded to hold the panel in another

27 <https://twitter.com/akistanbuluni/status/1536801244785827841>

28 https://twitter.com/gencdusunceist/status/1537400760123723778?ref_src=twsrc%5Fetfw%7Ctwcamp%5Ftweetembed%7Ctwtterm%5E1537400760123723778%7Ctwtgr%5E%7Ctw-con%5E%5E1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.birgun.net%2Fhaber%2Fiu-esitlik-toplulugu-etkinligi-miz-seriatci-cetelerin-linc-tehditleri-sebebiyle-iptal-edildi-392222

29 https://www.instagram.com/p/Ce0v2_CIZQU/

30 <https://www.unikuir.org/haberler/istanbul-universitesi-nde-yapilmasi-planlanan-onur-piknigi-katilimcilarin-guvenligi-icin-iptal-edildi-17-06-2022>

31 <https://twitter.com/OdtuCevre/status/1537503727803944961?s=20&t=6aBACltoIH3UALsSzqhocA>

classroom after finding that the originally planned amphitheater was locked.

Marmara University LGBTIQAA+ Solidarity Network (KuirMar) was targeted with hate speech and threats during a press statement by a group called “Marmara University Grey Wolves” on June 24, ahead of the Pride Week picnic organized by KuirMar.³² KuirMar then had to hold the picnic without announcing the venue and out of safety concerns.³³ In addition, KuirMar announced that it received support from university components and thanked them for their solidarity.³⁴

Istanbul Technical University (İTÜ) has initiated a disciplinary investigation against the participant from Cins Arı who was detained during the demonstration held in Taksim on the 9th anniversary of the Gezi Park Protests.³⁵

The screening of the films *My Child*, *Laurence Anyways*, and *Go* which were planned to be shown as part of the open-air events organized by Boğaziçi University Cinema Club, has been prevented by the school administration without providing any specific reason or written decision.³⁶ Following the club’s planned event to screen LGBTI+ themed films, the activities of the club were blocked for a period of one month by the appointed rector’s decision, and the club’s board of directors was removed from their positions.³⁷

The queer performance night that the LGBTI+ Club wanted to organize at Özyeğin University was canceled by the university administration. The administration has suggested that the club organize the event outside the campus or host a discussion instead of a performance night.³⁸ Upon this development, the club held interviews with the artists it invited.

³² <https://twitter.com/teskilatmarmara/status/1540357011493232640?s=20&t=FzOVfHZXOtR-3ujdIYY7w>

³³ https://www.instagram.com/p/CfKjgJJoRu_/

³⁴ <https://www.instagram.com/p/CfNCmAOoVlq/>

³⁵ <https://twitter.com/itucinarsi/status/1550945769745747969?s=21&t=duHTqUhVcvuHRzLavqlwAw>

³⁶ <https://www.instagram.com/p/CgSQcUXM6Ow/?igshid=YmMyMTA2M2Y%3D>

³⁷ <https://kaosgl.org/haber/bogazici-universitesi-sinema-kulubu-ne-1-ay-faaliyet-engeli>

³⁸ <https://www.unikuir.org/haberler/ozyegin-universitesi-kendi-onay-verdigi-etkinligi-34-kampuse-uygun-olmadigi-34-icin-iptal-etti-15-10-2022>

Kadıköy Governorship has banned the screening of the documentary named “Paris is Burning,” which was planned to be shown by Istanbul University Equality Community on November 16th.³⁹ *The Governorship, in its decision, claimed that the documentary screening would be considered a demonstration and alleged that “there was strong evidence and information indicating that during the illegal demonstration, public order and security would be severely disrupted, terrorist propaganda and provocative actions would take place, and crimes would be committed”*. The District Governorate announced the decision in a press release published on its website.⁴⁰

The screening of the film “So Pretty” by the Izmir Institute of Technology Cinema Club, as part of the Transgender Day of Remembrance on November 20, has been prevented by the university administration. After this development, the club expressed their intention to screen the film “Boys Don’t Cry,” but they did not receive any response from the university regarding this matter.⁴¹

The “Gender and Sports” event planned by the Women’s Studies Research Center at Erciyes University was canceled by the school administration due to being targeted with anti-LGBTQ+ statements.⁴²

In the trial opened demanding punishment for the individuals who were detained during the protests that took place during the Boğaziçi Resistance, the students have been acquitted. This case, known as the “Rainbow Flag Case” in the public, is due to the mention in the indictment prepared by the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office that the rainbow flag was not removed “despite warnings.” The prosecutor of the trial, disagreeing with the decision and seeking punishment for the students, has appealed the verdict by resorting to the appellate process. The decision of the Istanbul Regional Administrative Court is currently awaited in this matter.⁴³

39 <https://www.unikuir.org/haberler/kaymakamlik-universiteli-lgbti-toplulugunun-film-gosterimini-yasakladi-16-11-2022>

40 <http://www.kadikoy.gov.tr/basin-aciklamasi-15>

41 <https://susma24.com/so-pretty-filminin-gosterimine-yasak/>

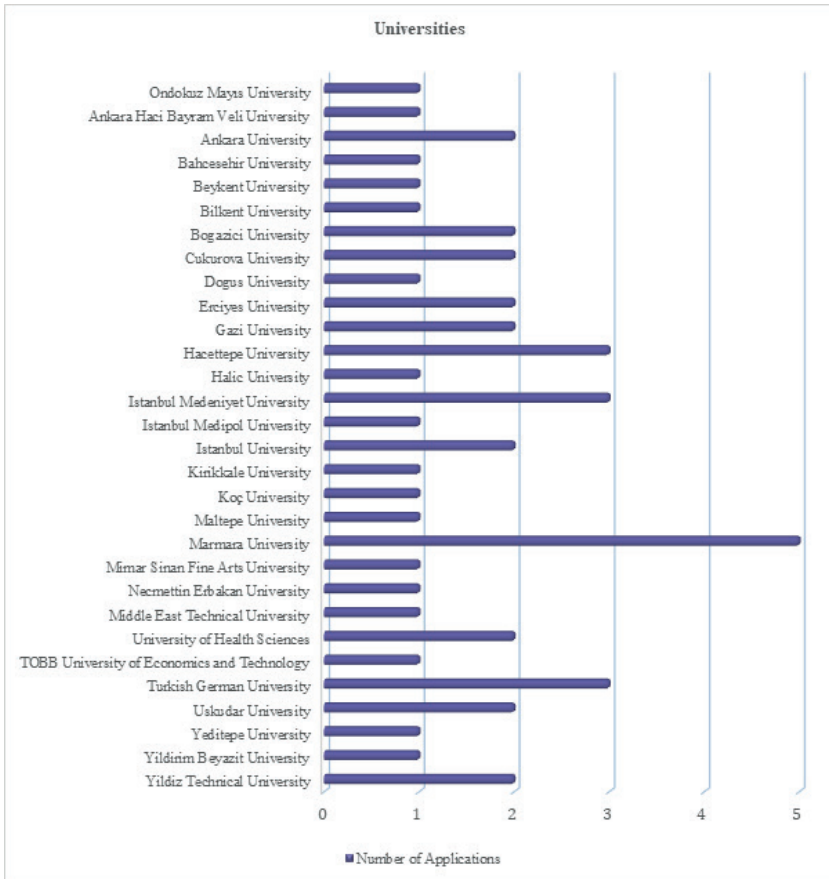
42 <https://kaosgl.org/haber/erciyes-universitesi-kendi-kadin-etkinligini-iptal-etti>

43 <https://www.unikuir.org/haberler/gokkusagi-bayragi-davasinda-bogazicili-ogrenciler-bera-at-etti-29-12-2022>

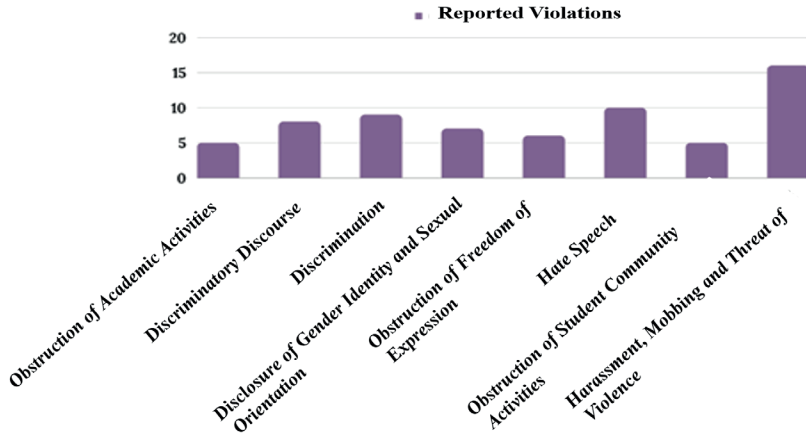
3. Analysis of Discrimination and Violation of Rights in Universities

Reporting Form Data

Incidents of human rights violations related to LGBTI+ rights in universities have been collected through a form that was made accessible in January 2022. A total of 49 reported cases of human rights violations have been documented from 30 different universities located in Adana, Ankara, Istanbul, Kayseri, Kırıkkale, Konya, and Samsun.



After receiving responses regarding the violations, the reported violations in universities have been categorized into 8 headings.



According to the data obtained from the reported cases under the heading *Obstruction of Academic Activities*, 5 individuals have stated that they were obstructed or discouraged by academics or university administration during their thesis and assignment works related to LGBTI+ and gender topics.

According to the data obtained from the reported cases under the heading *Discriminatory Discourse*, 5 individuals have stated that academics and students have made LGBTI+phobic and discriminatory remarks during classes. It has been stated that when students engage in discriminatory discourse, academics have been mentioned to support such remarks.

According to the data obtained from the reported cases under the heading *Discrimination*, it has been found that 9 LGBTI+ individuals are subjected to discriminatory practices in universities based on their sexual identity and orientation.

Under the heading *Disclosure of Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation*, 7 violations have been reported, with 4 of them occurring in dormitories and 3 in classrooms.

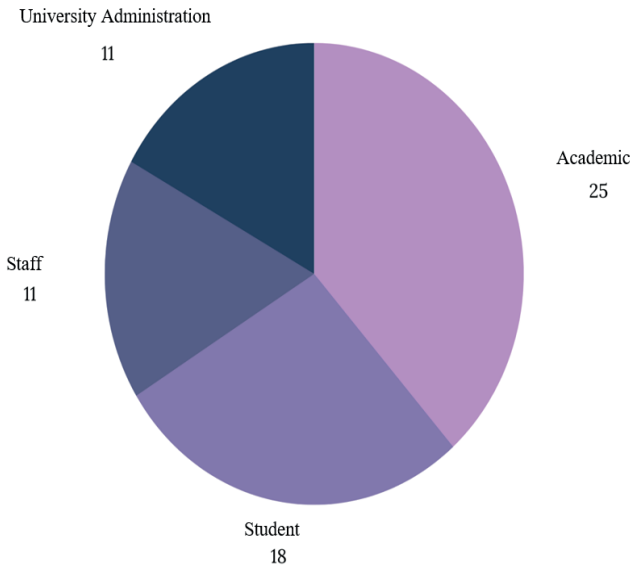
6 violations were reported under the heading of *Obstruction of Freedom of Expression*. In all of these violations, it was stated that the violation was committed by academics.

According to the data obtained from 10 people reported under the heading of *Hate Speech*, it was stated that members of all levels of the university made hate speech towards LGBTI+s.

5 violations were reported under the heading of *Obstruction of Student Community Activities*. LGBTI+ students have faced obstacles and cancellations from university administrations in organizing their events. Their written requests to establish official student clubs have been denied.

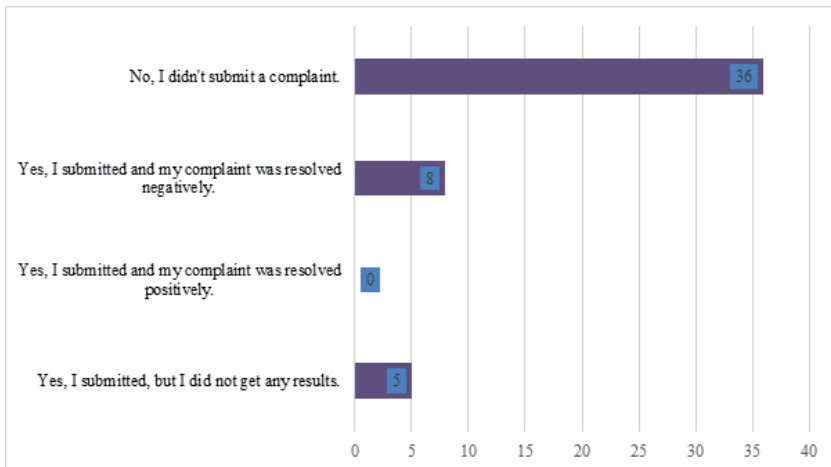
Under the heading of *Harassment, Mobbing and Threat of Violence*, 16 violations were reported. According to the reported data provided by the right holders, the violations were categorized as follows: 2 cases of mobbing against academics, 3 cases of physical violence, 5 cases of sexual harassment, 3 cases of verbal harassment, and 3 cases of threats of physical violence.

Findings on which members of the university perpetrated the violations are given below.



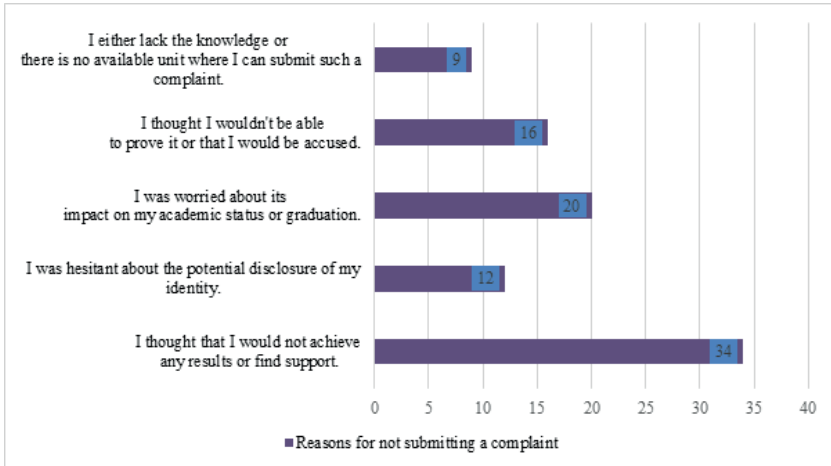
According to the data obtained from the 49 individuals, the university members responsible for the human rights violations were identified as follows: 25 cases involved academics, 18 cases involved students, 11 cases involved university administration, and 11 cases involved staff members. An interesting finding in this regard is that out of the 9 reported cases under the *Discrimination* category, 7 cases involved personnel (such as student affairs, library, cafeteria, dormitories, security staff, etc.) responsible for the discrimination, while 3 cases involved university administration.

The responses to the question regarding reporting of the violations are as follows:



Out of the 49 individuals, 36 of them did not report the incidents they experienced, while 13 individuals made a report. Among the 13 individuals who reported, 8 of them had their complaints result in outcomes against them, while 5 of them had their complaints result in outcomes in their favor. None of the respondents have mentioned receiving positive outcomes regarding their reported incidents.

The reasons for not reporting the violations are as follows:



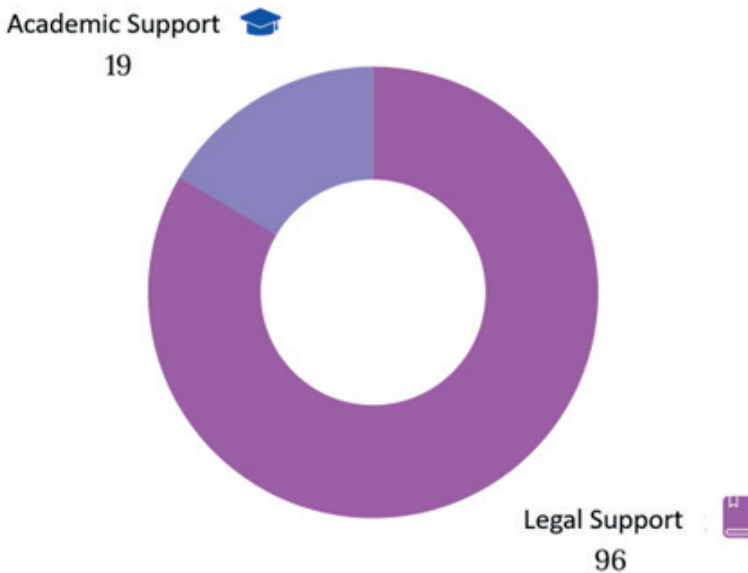
Out of the LGBTI+ individuals who experienced rights violations and discrimination at universities, 34 of them did not report the incidents due to their belief that they would not receive any results or support, while 20 individuals were concerned about the potential impact on their grades or graduation status. Additionally, 16 individuals expressed doubts about their ability to prove the violations or feared being accused themselves, 12 individuals were afraid of revealing their identity, and 9 individuals stated that there was no specific unit or entity to which they could submit their complaints. The striking finding here is that, regardless of the subject of the complaint, the biggest reason that prevents LGBTI+s in universities from complaining is that they think that they will not be able to get results regarding their complaints and that they will not be able to find support in this process.

When examining the reasons for not lodging complaints and the reported violations and discrimination, a clear pattern emerges, particularly in cases involving harassment, mobbing, physical threats, and involvement of university administration and academics. LGBTI+s exposed to harassment, mobbing and threats of violence pointed out three main reasons for not making a complaint/report: The lack of a designated unit to report to, the belief that they cannot prove the violation or fear of

being accused, and the perception that they will not achieve any results or find support. Another prominent factor in not lodging complaints or reporting incidents related to discrimination and rights violations caused by university administrations or academic staff is the fear of negative consequences on their grades or graduation status.

4. Discrimination and Human Rights Violations in 2022 through Legal and Academic Support Data

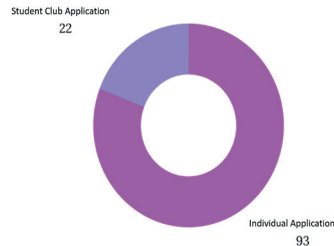
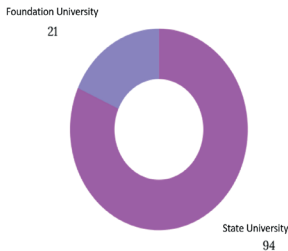
Between January 2022 and December 2022, out of the 178 legal support applications made to the ÜniKuir Association, 96 of them, and out of the 262 academic support applications, 19 of them, involve rights violations and discrimination against LGBTI+ individuals in universities.



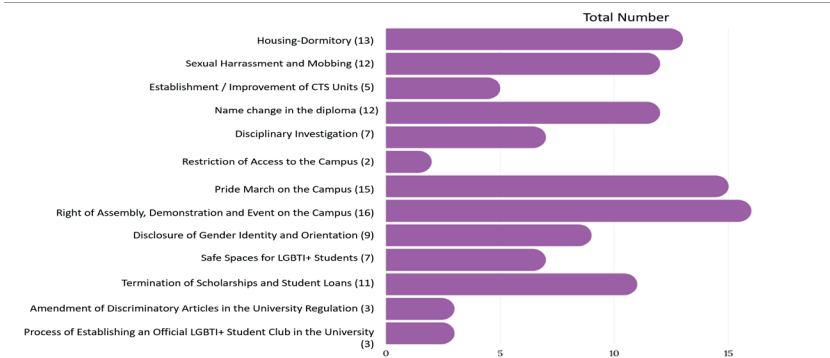
Out of the 115 applications, the highest number of applications were received from Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir, respectively. In addition to these cities, the distribution of the 12 cities where applications were received is as follows:



Looking at the distribution of universities where reported violations of rights took place; 94 applications were received from state universities and 21 from foundation universities. Out of the 115 applications, 93 of them were individual applications, while 22 of them were from LGBTI+ student clubs at universities.



The distribution of support applications received by the ÜniKuir Association since January 2022 regarding rights violations and discrimination against LGBTI+ individuals at universities is as follows:



As seen in case monitoring, LGBTI+ students in 2022 have mostly requested information regarding restrictions or obstacles to freedom of association, freedom of assembly (events), and freedom of demonstration, as well as support for legal processes and assistance with legal proceedings. In this context, among the requests for legal support, the prominent issues are the right to hold meetings, demonstrations, and events on campus, organizing Pride Marches on campuses, scholarship and tuition fee deduction issues, and disciplinary investigations.

Violations of the right to assembly, demonstration, and event on campus are observed in cases where LGBTI+ communities or student groups aiming to organize workshops or events related to gender issues face difficulties, obstacles, or cancellations of their activities. Disciplinary investigations also have an important place in the practices of preventing freedom of association in universities. According to the reported data, out of the applications related to disciplinary investigations, 5 of them were initiated due to participation in demonstrations and marches on or off the university campus, and 2 of them were initiated for distributing stickers/brochures. None of the activities that were obstructed or subjected to sanctions were illegal, hateful, or aggressive in nature. Therefore, it is evident that there have been unlawful and illegitimate interventions in terms of promoting peaceful advocacy activities, strengthening organization, and exercising the right to protest.

The most significant finding that emerges from the analysis of the support data received by UniKuir Association is that a human rights violation often leads to another human rights violation or discrimination. Applications related to disciplinary investigations have followed the increased applications on meetings and protest marches during the months when student activities intensify in universities, particularly in May and June. From July onwards, there has been an increase in applications regarding the suspension of scholarships and student loans. Additionally, starting from November, the focus has shifted towards the lawsuits filed against students who participated in the Pride Marches held on campuses. Thus, it can be observed that human rights violations have become systematic, diversified, and intensified to a degree that will leave different impacts and yield consequences, even escalating to violence.

The scope of the issues mentioned in the “Right to be Free from Discrimination and Violence” highlighted in case monitoring can be seen from a broader perspective through support applications. In applications related to housing and dormitories in universities, instances of violations have been reported where individuals are subjected to threats, harassment, and violence, or face disciplinary actions such as expulsion or termination of their dormitory affiliation, citing their sexual identity or sexual orientation as the reason. It has been reported that these human rights violations also occur due to the exercise of freedom of organization or the rights to assembly, protest, and march.

Two of the applications regarding changes in discriminatory provisions in university regulations relate to the modification of names assigned in diplomas and the course system, while one application pertains to the dormitory regulations. The presence of provisions in university-issued diploma guidelines stating that diplomas will not be reissued according to updated records due to changes in graduates’ personal information in official records violates the right to privacy for LGBTI+ individuals. As a result, individuals can legally change their names, gender markers, and other personal information on any official document through a court order, but they cannot change the information on their diplomas. Thus, individuals are forced to disclose personal information about their private lives without their consent whenever their diplomas are used or presented. Due to this problem, 12 people from different universities asked for support regarding the diploma process. Similarly, the use of assigned names stated on identification documents instead

of individuals' actual names on attendance lists, assignment lists, internet-based systems used by universities, and email addresses leads to similar violations of rights. In addition, recent changes to regulations governing university accommodation facilities and other relevant legislation have been identified as having the potential to create violations of rights. For instance, with the amendments made to the METU Dormitory Regulations⁴⁴, participation in protests and criticism of university administration have been added as grounds for eviction from the dormitory. As a result of this change, students who exercise their freedom of expression or right to peaceful assembly and protest can face eviction from the dormitory, in addition to other potential violations of their rights such as their right to housing and education.

Information and advocacy support have been provided to 5 LGBTI+ student groups regarding the improvement or establishment of Sexual Harassment and Assault Unit (CTS) at their universities. 7 of the reported sexual harassment and mobbing instances were shared in the interviews held within the scope of Academic Support. During the interviews, the individuals conveyed the forms of violence they experienced at their university, such as sexual harassment and mobbing, and requested support on issues such as application mechanisms and psychosocial support. Within the context of Academic Support, 5 academics and 2 students who reached out have sought assistance regarding violations occurring in classes, disclosure of sexual identity, bullying towards LGBTI+ students, and strategies to address hate speech, while requesting guidance on how to establish a safe space for LGBTI+ students during classes and on campus.

The absence of inclusive provisions for LGBTI+ individuals in university regulations, as well as the lack of institutionalization in combating harassment and violence, result in instances of sexual harassment and violence, as well as violations in housing and diploma processes.

⁴⁴<https://www.diken.com.tr/odtude-yeni-yurt-yonetmeligi-ogrenciler-kayyimin-insafina-kaldi/>

5. 2022 in Universities from the Perspective of LGBTI+ Students

5. 2022 in Universities from the Perspective of LGBTI+ Students

Focus group meetings were held with right holders in December in order to include the experiences of LGBTI+ students in the report. Focus group discussions were conducted with 15 students from 14 universities located in Ankara, Antalya, Aydın, Istanbul, Izmir, Mardin, Mugla, Sakarya, and Yalova. During these discussions, we asked questions about various aspects of campus life, including events organized by students, disciplinary investigations, scholarship and credit cuts, evictions from dormitories, university regulations and practices, as well as the attitudes of and relationships between students and university personnel such as private security officers, administrative staff, and service providers.

5.1. Community Activities Organizing Events and Meetings

In the first question posed to LGBTI+ students about their ability to use the campus for organizing events and obtaining permits required from the relevant units of the university for their activities, only students from three universities stated that they did not encounter any major problems in 2022. It has been highlighted that the official recognition of student clubs at Istanbul Technical University, Koç University, and Özyeğin University has a substantial impact in this regard. Eight students stated that they organized events outside the campus due to the attitudes of university administration. Three students mentioned that they organized events both on campus and off-campus. One student said that they were unable to organize any events at all.

“We usually can’t organize events on campus. We had organized a Pride Picnic once because we were unable to hold a Pride March. However, even on that occasion, private security guards did not leave us alone.” - **Ilgaz**, *Ege University Student*

“Students cannot use the campus freely in general, so we met at a cafe close to the campus this year. That gathering was also disrupted by the police.” - **Çiğdem**, *Istanbul University Student*

“In 2020, a moderate statement titled “LGBTI+ Rights are Human Rights” was published, and subsequently, the club that released the statement became a target. The university rector also made discriminatory remarks against them. Afterwards, attempts to gather within the campus and organize an event that could provide visibility were unsuccessful. When imagining such a scenario, we generally anticipate that we would be subjected to violence.” - **A** student from Mardin University

Out of the 15 students, 7 mentioned that they were able to receive support from academics in order to carry out their events. However, it was noted that this support varied depending on the faculty and department to which the academics were affiliated. However, 12 students mentioned that other student clubs at their universities did not face such problems when organizing events. They expressed that groups with racist, reactionary, and divisive rhetoric were able to organize events and gather without difficulty.

“We organize events outside the campus because right-wing groups, nationalists, and similar opposing groups create problems on campus. In contrast, those groups do not face difficulties in organizing events. We cannot claim to be completely safe even outside the campus.” - **E.**, *Akdeniz University Student*

The students who are able to organize events and gatherings on campus reported experiencing various obstacles such as receiving no response to their petitions for event approval, being prohibited from hanging posters, not being provided with a venue for the event, having their attendee and participant lists requested and scrutinized, and facing censorship and self-censorship of their content and event announcements.

“While other clubs do not put as much effort into their petitions, we take extra precautions, such as avoiding spelling errors and submitting our petitions well in advance, to avoid any potential issues.” - **Alp**, *Istanbul Technical University Student*

“A film festival was organized during the Spring semester of 2022 with the participation of numerous student societies. Three to four student societies were collaborating to screen films. The festival was held with projectors on the grass field, drawing a crowd of hundreds of people. As the QueerDeer, Women’s Studies and Vegan student club, we wanted to screen a movie and submitted the petition 1 month in advance. However, our event was obstructed by citing the reason that the person authorized to sign the approval was not present at the school. They pretend to agree only until it serves their own interests.” - **Bebil**, *Hacettepe University Student*

“Instead of direct action, we consistently encounter censorship under various pretexts, yet we devise methods to host events by navigating through filters.” - **Şilan**, *Muğla University Student*

“During the early stages of the pandemic, while taking online classes, they requested an introductory video from all student clubs. We created and sent it on time, but it was never included. It is stored in the archive, but they did not use it; they censored it. As new student clubs are forming, they have once again requested a similar video this year. We reminded the archive and the censorship and asked them to give us a place. Because visibility is important, and it was our right to be in that promotional video as an official student club. They said, ‘You did not send us a video, there is no such video’. - **Melis**, *Hacettepe University Student*

7 out of 8 LGBTI+ students who do not feel safe on campus or have been harassed by security have reported that they were subjected to various attacks, verbal harassment, and physical violence even when their events and gatherings were moved off-campus. LGBTI+ students in universities

have expressed that the barriers and challenges they face impact both their community activities and their motivation.

“Following the events that occurred this year, there has been a slight decrease in club participation and event attendance due to threats and pressures.” - **Alp**, *Istanbul Technical University Student*

“Balancing the task of ensuring people’s safety and the struggle we engage in becomes quite challenging.”
- **Çiğdem**, *Istanbul University Student*

Among the 15 students, only two students stated that their university’s stance had been positive until 2022, but they mentioned that there have been changes with the recent developments this year.

“We had prepared a memorial corner for November 20th this year. Security took photographs of the materials there. We had never experienced such a thing before. We also discussed this situation with the event office, and they told us to inform them if it happens again. We also set up a booth at school for December 1st. At that booth, we had brochures, badges, flags, and more. But they didn’t let us distribute condoms.” - **Buğra**, *Koç University Student*

“For the first time this year, permission was not granted for one of our events. After reviewing the sample videos, we provided and considering the uncertainty regarding the number of invited individuals, they conveyed that they found the event inappropriate. When we went to talk to them, it was not clearly communicated to us which elements were found inappropriate. We wrote a petition to request clarification, but we did not receive a response afterwards. We remembered again and got ghosted. This incident took place in October, and we still did not receive a response in December. I can say that we were under extra scrutiny after the Performance Night.” - **R.**, *Özyeğin University Student*

One of the most significant changes in university administrations in 2022 was the notable hindrance and censorship of film screenings, the requirement for detailed event summaries beforehand, or the concerning discovery of discriminatory rhetoric targeting the LGBTI+ community used by university administrations during the permission process.

“We were planning to watch the movie *Whistle If You Come Back*. When we requested permission, they asked numerous questions about the movie. We also mentioned that the film had received support from the Ministry of Culture, and they requested an official document regarding that. We managed to find an official document, and they granted permission based on that. It was the first time we encountered such a thing” - **A** student from Yalova University

When we wanted to screen the movie “*Aşk Büyü vs.*” (*Love Spells and All That vs.*), they asked for a summary of the film for the first time. We mentioned the title of the movie and described it as a queer film in our petition, but the summary was never included in the petition.” - **Melis**, *Hacettepe University Student*

“They provided negative criticism of the visibility of LGBTI+ representation in films, claiming that it was being “normalized.” - **Şilan**, *Muğla University Student*

5.2. Disciplinary Investigations, Scholarship and Tuition Credit Deductions Against LGBTI+ Students

Out of the 15 students who participated in the discussion, only 2 of them stated that they had not been subjected to practices such as intimidation, investigation, or punishment. On the other hand, the remaining 13 students shared various experiences indicating otherwise. 8 students expressed that the university administration used the threat of disciplinary investigations and scholarship deductions, while 11 students stated that they faced intimidation aimed at obstructing community activities.

5 students mentioned that students had their scholarships revoked and were expelled from dormitories due to their participation in off-campus events such as Pride March and Feminist Night March. Additionally, 3 students stated that they underwent investigations due to their involvement in student club activities at the university. The practices of profiling, intimidation, and punishment have led to concerns among LGBTI+ students in universities that they do not join student clubs, are hesitant to participate in events, and fear they will face problems in their future careers. These were also emphasized by the students as significant points due to such practices.

“We were distributing stickers to those who came to the community, but we did not apply them. One of the individuals who received a sticker was seen by security personnel while applying it, and they mentioned that such an act could lead to the closure of the student club. As a result, the identity cards of the members of the community were photographed.” - **Bebil**, *Hacettepe University Student*

“We were also handing out condoms at the clubs’ festival. Each club actually distributes something according to their own preferences. The security personnel intervened and informed us that we were not allowed to distribute condoms. The people at the booth did not hear this and the condoms remained on the table. People passing by continued to take them. We debated whether to risk the closure of the booth or to prioritize reaching more people by removing the condoms. We decided to remove the condoms. When one of our friends went to security and mentioned that many other clubs were distributing different things, but only we were stopped, the security officer came, and currently, there are discussions about initiating a disciplinary investigation.” - **Alp**, *Istanbul Technical University Student*

“During the Spring semester of 2022, when the Women’s Rights Club had the term LGBTI+ on their poster, plainclothes police officers and private security personnel came to the booth and told us that I couldn’t hang up the poster. However, we received approval for the poster, but they did not accept it. When we said that the posters of other clubs were not approved, they said ‘yours is different’. When we expressed

that we wouldn't remove the poster unless the same sanctions were applied to every club, they called our advisor and threatened to shut down the club within the day. It appears that we are facing not only a disciplinary investigation but also the use of threats and surveillance as a means of control. - **Serhat**, *Marmara University Student*

5.3. Discrimination Against LGBTI+s in University Regulations and Practices

Among the 15 students, only 2 expressed that they hadn't encountered any regulations or practices that could indirectly lead to discrimination against LGBTI+ individuals. Instead, they highlighted the presence of legislation and practices in their universities that promote anti-discrimination and uphold equality. 13 students have mentioned experiencing discriminatory practices in various locations of the university, including dormitories, classrooms, campus entrances, and sexual harassment units.

Twelve students have reported that transgender students are unable to access accommodation services such as dormitories and student guesthouses. Additionally, it has been mentioned that rules in women's dormitories are stricter, with constant monitoring and control.

“We are constantly exposed to warnings and accusatory rhetoric. We recently learned that two individuals were expelled from the dormitory based on allegations of engaging in a sexual relationship a few months ago. Following that incident, the cleaning staff started constantly issuing warnings regarding this matter.” - **Şilan**, *Muğla University Student*

“This year, warnings were posted in the ‘female’ student dormitories and residences, instructing female assigned students to dress ‘properly’ and not to dress ‘provocatively’” - **Melis**, *Hacettepe University Student*

5.4. Relationship of LGBTI+ Students with Administrative Staff and Security Officers

When asked about the discrimination or violence practices that LGBTI+ students are subjected to in their interactions with private security, administrative staff, or service providers on campuses, only 2 students mentioned that they did not experience such violations at their universities. However, 13 students shared various experiences detailing such incidents.

Trans and nonbinary students shared experiences of being hindered or facing obstacles by security personnel during the transition process due to their ID card photos, as well as instances of harassment or surveillance targeting LGBTQ+ students during events, and incidents where security personnel failed to take action or fulfill their duty when the victim of harassment or violence identified as LGBTQ+. The discriminatory and negative attitudes of staff members working in the universities' psychosocial support units, as well as those working in student affairs, libraries, and other departments, towards LGBTQ+ students have been shared.

“Sometimes difficulties arise when entering the campus. They occasionally do not find my appearance consistent with the name and photo on my ID card, which can cause difficulties. During restroom usage, I sometimes receive warnings from other students, such as reminders that it is the “women’s restroom.”” - **E.**, *Akdeniz University Student*

We prepared a single banner for Spirit Day that read “Queers are here” and planned to take photos on campus. We would also share the photos on our Instagram page. When we wanted to take photos in front of the Rectorate, security guards came and prevented us, asking for our full name and student ID number.” - **Aydan**, *Yeditepe University Student*

“At some events, the police and campus security would set up a camera at the entrance if the event was held on campus, recording the attendees.” - **Serhat**, *Marmara University Student*

“Two individuals who were assigned females were expelled from the library for kissing. But when a female and male kiss, it was never a problem. “The staff member said, “If I warn those lesbian perverts, will they attack me?” When we had a meeting with the director regarding the incident in the library, our communication was positive. However, no disciplinary action or warning was given to the staff member. Some groups are clearly favored by the security at the school.” - **Melis and Bebil**, Hacettepe University Students

5.5. Relationship of LGBTI+ Students with Academicians Conclusion

When asked about their interactions with academics and instances of human rights violations, hate speech, and silence in the face of bullying during classes, only 2 students described their communication with academics at their universities as extremely positive. However, 11 students mentioned that the situation varied depending on the departments and faculties, and 2 students explicitly stated that academics openly engaged in hate speech against LGBTI+ individuals during classes. Similarly, while only 2 students mentioned that topics such as gender studies, queer theory, and gender and sexuality studies were addressed and updated in their course syllabi, 13 students expressed that academics and course syllabi lacked updates in these areas and considered the theories taught to be inadequate.

The students have expressed that discriminatory attitudes and hate speech towards LGBTI+ individuals are sometimes propagated by academics, and when such behaviors come from fellow students, there is often a lack of warning or repercussions. They have also mentioned feeling compelled to remain silent in certain situations due to concerns about the potential impact on their grades and graduation. The academicians who express themselves in a more neutral way towards LGBTI+ people are thought to be lacking sufficient knowledge about LGBTI+ inclusivity and current issues.

“I have a friend who is transgender, and I gave a presentation about being queer. Some male students in the class manipulated our presentations. They clearly engaged in bullying, but the professor did not make any comments or intervene. However, in

other presentations, the professor would always give warnings like ‘Let’s listen to our classmates, and let’s not play with our phones. When I tried to talk to the professor about these incidents, they said that what the other students did was an expression of freedom of speech - **Melis**, Hacettepe University Student

“We frequently come across a situation in academic communication where our transgender friends are disproportionately subjected to the persistent use of their assigned names. Our professors are not adequately knowledgeable about LGBT+ rights and the issues of homophobia/transphobia. While there are academics who are supportive and have studies in the field, there are also professors who produce discriminatory discourses and remain silent when jokes are made in the classroom by the students.” - **Şilan**, Muğla University Student

“One day in class, there was a discussion about a musician. Someone from the back rows said that they were gay. Then our professor said, ‘Yes, he/she is not straight’. My female friend and I reacted to this statement. Sometimes, the remarks made by the instructors can be quite phobic, but in my department, the professors are open to criticism, so they apologized.” - **E.**, Sakarya University Student

“In the English preparatory classes during the introductory lessons, they are learning about pronouns. They are asked to form a sentence using “he” or “she.” A transgender student asks, “I’ve heard that there is a pronoun called ‘they.’ How do we use it?” The instructor responds, “There’s no such thing. I don’t support it.” The mentioned transgender student and others applied to the club. We applied to the diversity office to initiate the process. They supported us and escalated the issue to the English Language Center Director (ELC). - **Buğra**, Koç University Student

While the use of assigned names or pronouns is not be defined as a right in the legislation, it holds significant importance for LGBT+ students due to various reasons, such as enabling them to continue their education without being compelled to disclose their identities. This is one of the examples where the legislation is deficient in recognizing the human rights of LGBTI+s and causes violations of rights.

“There are students who give up on attending classes, withdraw, and cannot discuss their homework because the professors continue to use their assigned name.” - **Bebil**, *Hacettepe University Student*

9 out of 15 students reported facing discouragement, punishment, or redirection towards other topics, as well as discriminatory comments targeting the LGBT+ community, when expressing their desire to work on assignments, research papers, or theses related to gender studies, queer theory, or gender/sexuality studies.

“My advisor, who approves my courses, significantly delays approving a course that has queer content and tries to discourage me from taking it.” - **Aydan**, *Yeditepe University Student*

“I made a presentation about transgender people and my teacher put a lot of pressure on me during this process. My professor sent me a highly problematic and transphobic article in order for me to present it. In response, I informed them that if I am allowed to criticize it, I would still proceed with the presentation. During this process, KAOS GL provided me with resources, but my professor did not allow me to criticize the article during the presentation.” - **A student from Mardin University**

“I needed to find an LGBTQ+-friendly and gender studies-oriented advisor for my thesis. I couldn't find any suitable advisors among the professors I personally know. Other graduate and doctoral students

told me I wouldn't be able to find such an advisor. Without the help of a professor later on, I would have quit my department because I knew I didn't want to work on something else." - **E.**, *Akdeniz University Student*

All of the participating students expressed shared concerns about the impact of not feeling supported by academics or the presence of discriminatory and hateful discourse in their education, universities, and future careers. They have indicated that discriminatory attitudes and violations of rights experienced from academics, who are the second most significant group they interact with after their peers, impact their access to education and their desire to freely express themselves in universities.

"It is important to speak up during moments when it is necessary to contribute in class. Because if no one speaks up in class, many people will assume that there is nothing wrong and it can make many queer individuals feel isolated and alone." - **Serhat**, *Marmara University Student*

6. Conclusion

This report reveals that in 2022, human rights violations against LGBTI+ university students occurred through various methods and in different forms, both individually and at group level. The report highlights several categories of human rights violations, including obstruction of academic activities, discriminatory language, discrimination in accessing services, harassment, violence, mobbing, and restrictions on freedoms. Violations of rights can stem from individuals with different roles and responsibilities, including students, academics, administrators, and staff members. Additionally, sometimes these violations can be attributed to the policies of the institutions that students encounter. It is known that many LGBTI+ individuals struggle to find an effective mechanism to address human rights violations, and even if such mechanisms exist, they may not be aware of them or may choose not to utilize them for various reasons. In this regard, it is understood that universities with LGBTI+ organizations provide a safe space and the gains from advocacy efforts contribute to addressing and reducing human rights violations.

It is evident that one of the areas where LGBTI+ university students most frequently encounter human rights violations is the restriction or obstruction of their efforts to make their identities and advocacy work visible through various forms and methods. This situation indicates an attempt to render the exercise of constitutionally protected rights such as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and freedom of assembly and demonstration impossible by going against the principles of law, legislation, and universal principles. Moreover, despite the fact that interventions targeting the exercise of these rights, as demonstrated by the 9th METU Pride March, have been declared unlawful by the courts, there has been no change in the stance of university administrations and other decision-makers. Therefore, it can be argued that the rule of law, the concept of a constitutional state, and democratic principles are seriously undermined in this regard.

The situation is not limited to decisions that hinder the exercise of rights; it is observed that university LGBTI+ students who insist on exercising their constitutional rights are subjected to disciplinary investigations, cuts in scholarships and student loans, and legal actions in an attempt to

penalize them. As a result, pressure is exerted on individuals who exercise their constitutional rights and support the protection of constitutional rights, aiming to deter others from joining their ranks.

Despite all the human rights violations, it is observed that LGBTI+ organizations in universities continue to fight, increase advocacy efforts, and strengthen their organizational capacities. While it may not be the case in every university, it is worth acknowledging that there are allies who stand in solidarity with the LGBTI+ community and do not abandon them in their struggle. As ÜniKuir, we are proud to stand in solidarity with LGBTI+ organizations and human rights advocates in universities, whom we have learned from, resisted with, and walked the path together. Wishing for safer and freer campuses for every component of universities, especially LGBTI+ students!

7. Recommendations

A. To the University administrations and members;

- University administrations and their members should abandon the approach that censors LGBTI+ visibility in structural tools such as legislation, curriculum, policy documents, strategic plans, as well as in traditional practices like the medical oath. In the event that decision-makers choose to act in this manner, it is essential to implement measures that strengthen and empower individuals.
- It is crucial to establish effective, safe, and accessible mechanisms for LGBTI+ individuals to report incidents of discrimination, violence, and human rights violations they encounter. Comprehensive policy documents should be developed to regulate the functioning, principles, and rules of these mechanisms.
- Units dedicated to promoting equality and inclusivity should be established within universities. Academics, experts, and student communities working in the field should be actively involved in these units to ensure their effectiveness.
- Hate speech propaganda should not be permitted on university campuses and dormitories. Adequate measures and sanctions should be implemented against academics and staff members who support, endorse, or legitimize hate speech through media channels and actions.
- All forms of expression that do not incite violence, fuel discrimination or hatred, or legitimize such actions must be allowed to be safely expressed. Steps that may impede universities from fostering a free-thinking environment should be discontinued.
- Interventions without legal justification towards materials such as slogans, banners, signs, posters, flags, or badges that are

protected under freedom of expression should be ceased during graduation ceremonies.

- The demands of LGBTI+ student communities seeking official recognition should be met.
- The peaceful activities of LGBTI+ student communities should be acknowledged as constitutionally protected, regardless of their official status. Any practices that could create obstructive, restrictive, burdensome, or deterrent effects towards these communities should be abandoned.
- Security and administrative personnel, as well as faculty members, in universities should receive human rights education that includes LGBTI+ rights, covering current debates and literature.
- Promoting gender equality should be encouraged in the curriculum and orientation programs, addressing it as an important topic. Additionally, academics should be supported in organizing, implementing, and conducting academic activities in which they engage both individually and together with their students, with the aim of raising awareness among students on this matter.
- Curriculum should not include rhetoric, non-scientific and unethical content that is far from being up-to-date and modern. Units and individuals should be held accountable for any attitudes, behaviors, or expressions that contradict gender equality, as well as for instances of exclusion, hate speech, and discrimination, with appropriate sanctions implemented.
- Mechanisms should be established within campus governance to enhance the participation of student communities and students in decision-making processes.
- The demands presented by LGBTI+ students and organizations to decision-makers, within the scope of their right to participation, should not be left unattended but rather acknowledged and addressed promptly.

- An environment of academic freedom should be provided for the academic studies related to LGBTI+ rights and gender equality in universities. Researchers and academics who want to work in the field should be supported.
- Universities should provide support for combating human rights violations and discrimination faced by LGBTI+ individuals based on their identities, as well as for processes such as gender transition, coming out, and similar experiences. This support should include psychological counseling, social service counseling, legal counseling, and peer counseling. Universities should collaborate with LGBTI+ organizations for these initiatives.
- All areas within universities (restrooms, dormitories, medical facilities, social event spaces, changing rooms, classrooms, sports facilities, libraries, etc.) should be made inclusive for LGBTI+ individuals, taking into consideration individuals with identities beyond the binary gender system. Universities should ensure that LGBTI+ individuals who are unable or choose not to officially change their personal information, such as name or gender, are able to use their preferred name in university databases, classes, attendance lists, assignment records, and other relevant documents.
- It is necessary to encourage and support students for active citizenship. In this context, students should be provided with the necessary knowledge, critical thinking skills, and experiences to become active citizens. It is crucial to empower university LGBTI+ individuals as subjects who can address gender equality issues at the local or national level, facilitate problem-solving, encourage participation, foster policy, and discourse generation, and support their engagement in activism.
- LGBTI+ representation should be encouraged in existing or future Student Representative Council structures within universities.

B. To the Turkish Grand National Assembly and political parties;

- Constitutional and legal regulations that negatively affect the academic autonomy of universities should be repealed. The first step to be taken in this regard is the abolition of the Council of Higher Education.
- The legal regulations that seem to be used to prevent the peaceful activities of LGBTI+ students and student communities, especially the articles in the Higher Education Law that regulate the disciplinary law of students, should be renewed.
- Legislation should be amended to prevent hate speech, hate crimes, and discriminatory treatment against LGBTI+ individuals and organizations, ensuring their protection.
- The demands and human rights violations experienced by university LGBTI+ individuals should be brought to the agenda within the relevant legislative and auditing activities in parliament.
- Representatives of LGBTI+ organizations in universities should be invited to the discussions of specialized committees and subcommittees in the parliament to benefit from their expertise.
- A permanent committee should be established within the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM) to address youth issues and rights.
- The Constitution should be amended to include provisions that protect and enhance youth rights, as well as a perspective that upholds human rights and prohibits discrimination. Considering the significant efforts made by LGBTI+ organizations in addressing constitutional demands over the years, their work and the specific requests put forward in these endeavors should be taken into account and implemented.
- The structure of the Ombudsman Institution should be reorganized in accordance with the Paris Principles. It should be ensured that this structure is developed in a way that contributes to the protection and development of LGBTI+'s rights.

C. To the Presidency and administrative institutions;

- The Istanbul Convention should be re-signed immediately. Law No. 6284 should be clearly and unequivocally amended to ensure the inclusion and protection of the rights of LGBTI+ individuals.
- The ministries, especially the Ministry of Youth and Sports and the Ministry of National Education, responsible for the rights of LGBTI+ university students, should be assigned duties, powers, and responsibilities in this regard.
- Efforts to impede the activities of LGBTI+ organizations in universities, including their activities outside campus, should be ceased, recognizing that these activities are legal and legitimate.
- Actions that oppose the concept of gender should refrain from being conducted in a manner that is devoid of scientific, contemporary, and human rights standards.
- Academic studies and research on LGBTI+ rights and gender studies should be supported in universities.
- Student dormitories should be made safe and inclusive for LGBTI+ individuals, and for this purpose, awareness-raising activities should be conducted for management, staff, and students. Preventive and deterrent measures should be developed against any violations of rights arising from students or staff within the dormitories.
- The ambiguous expressions in the regulations governing the conditions for the termination of scholarships and student loans should be removed. It should be explicitly stated that scholarships and student loans cannot be terminated solely based on organizing or participating in activities such as meetings, demonstrations, press statements, or protests. Preventive measures should be taken against potential discrimination that LGBTI+ individuals may face in the provision, utilization, and termination of scholarships offered by non-governmental institutions.

- The procedures and principles regarding a change in the diploma should be regulated in accordance with the decisions of the courts on the protection of the right to respect private life so far. As a result, individuals who have undergone changes in their personal information should be allowed to fully change their diplomas without any annotations regarding the change of personal information being made.
- Measures should be taken in universities and among university students to prevent hate speech or acts of violence targeting LGBTI+ individuals, as well as any calls for such actions. The misuse of public resources for these purposes and the support of public officials for such actions should be effectively addressed, and appropriate sanctions should be imposed.

D. To the Judicial mechanisms and institutions;

- Legal aid and similar mechanisms should be operated to ensure university LGBTI+'s access to the right to seek their rights.
- Decisions regarding disciplinary investigations, decisions related to student organizations, and any other administrative actions that violate the rights of LGBTI+ individuals in universities should be promptly resolved through court cases, and the mechanism of stay of execution should be effectively utilized.
- Efficient mechanisms, such as decision-making bodies that determine the lack of grounds for investigation, should be implemented to ensure a favorable approach in cases where university LGBTI+ individuals face discriminatory or hate-motivated criminal complaints and other legal proceedings that are solely based on baseless accusations.
- Studies on the human rights of LGBTI+s in universities should be followed and the experience of the judiciary should be shared with studies that will ensure the development of human rights.

- LGBTI+ rights and gender equality courses should be included in the curriculum of the Justice Academy, and they should be taught by legal experts specializing in the field.
- LGBTI+ rights commissions/centers should be established in bar associations. These commissions and centers should collaborate and engage in solidarity with local LGBTI+ organizations in the city.
- The legal aid system of bar associations should be developed in a way that ensures accessibility and effective utilization for LGBTI+ individuals. Lawyers who will be involved in the legal aid system should be selected based on their training in LGBTI+ rights law, which can be organized within the bar association.

E. To the Civil society organizations;

- Efforts should be made to include the rights demands and issues of university LGBTI+ students in advocacy initiatives. Necessary measures should be taken to ensure the participation of individuals in these efforts.
- Safe spaces should be created to allow university LGBTI+ individuals to participate in rights-based organizations outside of LGBTI+ organizations.
- Civil society organizations consisting of lawyers, judges, and prosecutors should align their areas of work with the human rights approach of LGBTI+ individuals.
- The needs and demands of university LGBTI+ individuals should be addressed in the agenda of umbrella networks within rights-based civil society organizations, particularly in the context of education and organizational activities.
- Grant-making organizations should be reminded of their responsibility to create resources that include young university LGBTI+ individuals in their communications and funding initiatives.

- Civil society organizations working in the field of education and youth should establish partnerships and maintain active communication with LGBTI+ organizations and student clubs. Civil society should actively involve LGBTI+ students in participatory processes at both local and national levels.
- It is essential for civil society organizations to enhance the working conditions of both their volunteers and professional staff members when collaborating with marginalized groups like LGBTI+ individuals or conducting group-oriented work. It is crucial to ensure the needs of LGBTI+ students who volunteer are met and to prevent the exploitation of their efforts.
- Civil society organizations providing psychosocial services/support should develop inclusive policies that prioritize university/young LGBTI+ individuals in their services.
- Human rights-based civil society organizations and professional associations should organize events that link LGBTI+ rights with their respective fields during Pride Month, ensuring inclusivity for young LGBTI+ individuals in these activities.

F. To the International control mechanisms and international organizations;

- During visits to Turkey, it is important to engage with LGBTI+ student organizations at universities and hold meetings with decision-makers to address the issues and demands in the field with determination.
- Advocacy efforts of LGBTI+ student organizations in universities should be supported financially, logistically, and in terms of visibility.
- Strong statements of support should be made against the rights violations of university LGBTI+s, and efforts should be made to monitor and address these violations. In this regard, lawsuits resulting from human rights violations or initiated to address these violations should be closely monitored.

- Specialized studies should be conducted focusing on policy recommendations and principles that decision-makers need to consider addressing the issues faced by LGBTI+ students in universities. LGBTI+ students in universities should not be overshadowed by convoluted sentences that obscure their specific issues within broad categories.
- In reporting and advocacy efforts, it is important to provide significant representation for LGBTI+ individuals within the university community.
- Efforts should be made to ensure the effective implementation of binding or advisory decisions regarding LGBTI+ rights by international audit mechanisms.
- Rights-based organizations and institutions with stakeholders should be encouraged to conduct their work in an inclusive manner that includes and encompasses LGBTI+ individuals.
- Funding institutions should request the evaluation and monitoring of the impact of supported projects on LGBTI+ individuals, as well as the measurement of which groups within the LGBTI+ community are being supported by the project.
- The status of LGBTI+ rights at collaborating universities should be observed, and information should be sought from civil society organizations working in the field regarding this matter. In order to advance LGBTI+ rights, it is crucial to address universities and academics who contribute to rights violations or display indifference towards human rights abuses, while refraining from collaborating with those that show no progress or improvement in addressing these concerns.
- International organizations involved in the field of LGBTI+ and youth issues should incorporate the status of LGBTI+ rights and activists in Turkey into their efforts and initiatives.
- Regional or global Pride Parade platforms should monitor and support Pride Parades taking place on campuses and in cities in Turkey.

The report highlights several categories of human rights violations, including obstruction of academic activities, discriminatory language, discrimination in accessing services, harassment, violence, mobbing, and restrictions on freedoms. Violations of rights can stem from individuals with different roles and responsibilities, including students, academics, administrators, and staff members. Additionally, sometimes these violations can be attributed to the policies of the institutions that students encounter. It is known that many LGBTI+ individuals struggle to find an effective mechanism to address human rights violations, and even if such mechanisms exist, they may not be aware of them or may choose not to utilize them for various reasons. In this regard, it is understood that universities with LGBTI+ organizations provide a safe space and the gains from advocacy efforts contribute to addressing and reducing human rights violations.

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