



University Queer Research and LGBTI+ Solidarity Association¹ (UniKuir NGO), founded in 2020 in Turkey, is a youth and LGBTI+ civil society organisation run by young LGBTI+ people. On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we are pleased to present our views on the present and future of human rights.

Today, as in the past, LGBTI+'s struggle against discrimination, violence, oppression policies and human rights violations in many parts of the world. In some parts of the world, the right to life of LGBTI+ persons is directly targeted by the state, while in another part of the world, anti-discrimination laws and policies are produced in the opposite way. However, we know that LGBTI+ persons all over the world are subjected to rights violations and struggle against them.²

Turkey is also a place where LGBTI+ rights violations are intensely experienced and a strong struggle is waged. Especially since 2015, LGBTI+ persons have been seriously targeted by the political power using public power, media and politics. LGBTI+ persons are subjected to hate crimes, widespread hate speech, violations of freedom of assembly and demonstration including pride marches, housing problems, discrimination in public and private sector employment, difficulties in gender reassignment process, arbitrary and unnecessary surgeries for intersex individuals, The refugee is struggling with many problems such as rights violations against LGBTI+ persons, the destruction of gender equality policies as a result of the decision to withdraw from the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, discrimination and rights violations against LGBTI+ persons in universities.³

LGBTI+ persons in Turkey are targeted especially with the argument of "protection of the family". As a result of the general elections held on 14-28 May 2023, the People's Alliance led by the Justice and Development Party won the elections again. During this

¹ UniKuir is a legally registered non-governmental organisation with a legal personality. UniKuir works for universities and campuses to be equal, free and safe places for LGBTI+ people. UniKuir carries out its work under four different programmes. These are access to equal rights, media and communication, organising and solidarity, and political engagement and advocacy. While carrying out these activities, it acts together with LGBTI+ student communities and volunteers at universities in Turkey. Internet address: www.unikuir.org

² In this regard, annual reports of the global LGBTI+ organisation ILGA World can be consulted. Access address: <https://www.ilga-europe.org/about-us/who-we-are/annual-reports/>

³ Attached are two different reports published by UniKuir. These are Pride Marches on Campuses 2022 Report and Discrimination and Rights Violations against LGBTI+'s at Universities 2022 Report. Also Research Report on Discrimination Against Trans+ Students at Universities , 2021, UniKuir NGO, Access address: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/uwh074cwhtsiki5/RESEARCH%20REPORT%20ON%20DISCRIMINATION%20TO%20TRANS%2B%20STUDENTS%20AT%20UNIVERSITIES.pdf?dl=0> and Research Report on Trans+ Individuals Access to Health Care Services, 2021, UniKuir NGO, Access address: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/bma9r6shah82ykk/RESEARCH%20REPORT%20ON%20TRANS%2B%20INDIVIDUALS%27%20ACCESS%20TO%20HEALTH%20CARE%20SERVICES.pdf?dl=0>



general election process, unlike others, LGBTI+ persons were frequently targeted by the political power. The political power and the political parties it allied with made policy promises that would regress and violate LGBTI+ rights. Political parties that are members of the People's Alliance promised that LGBTI+ rights advocacy would be banned under the name of "propaganda ban"⁴, LGBTI+ associations would be closed⁵, grants provided from abroad for studies on LGBTI+ rights would be prevented, the gender harmonisation process, which already causes serious violations of rights, would be made more difficult, and all kinds of content representing LGBTI+s in the curriculum and media would be removed.⁶ On the other hand, in the constitutional amendment proposal submitted to parliament before the elections but not accepted, there were discourses that criminalise, marginalise and hate speech against LGBTI+ persons. If a new proposal is submitted and accepted, rights violations against LGBTI+ persons in Turkey will increase and deepen.

The 21st century is a period of positive or negative developments regarding LGBTI+ rights in many parts of the world. There is no doubt that LGBTI+ rights will continue to be one of the important agendas of every country in the future. For this reason, all human rights mechanisms, especially the United Nations, need to address LGBTI+ rights in a more comprehensive, effective, interdisciplinary, practical and planned manner. Materials and policies that compile the problems and rights of LGBTI+ persons in a specific way (individually) should be increased. In addition, the situation of LGBTI+ rights should be evaluated and included in all human rights issues.

We are a civil society organisation that observes that young people's participation in human rights processes, organising and advocacy capacity is increasing. University LGBTI+ student organisations all over Turkey are fighting for their rights despite all kinds of difficulties. Moreover, despite the negative developments in Turkey, the number of these student organisations is constantly increasing. This shows that young people will play a very important role in the future of human rights. In the context of LGBTI+ rights, LGBTI+ youth will continue to be pioneers. Governments, civil society, international organisations and the United Nations should recognise this reality. Apart from what we have mentioned above, our recommendations are as follows:

⁴ Access address:

<https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2023/03/turkeys-ruling-alliance-welcomes-islamist-parties-misogynist-agendas>

⁵ Access address:

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

⁶ Access address:

<https://www.leidenislamblog.nl/articles/democratic-backsliding-and-anti-gender-politics-in-turkey-what-to-expect-after-the-2023-elections>



- The youth declaration should specifically include the general situation, problems and political attitudes and recommendations on LGBTI+ rights.
- Effective tools should be developed to prevent states from causing rights violations against LGBTI+ persons or acting passively against rights violations.
- Access to and participation in human rights mechanisms should be made safe for young LGBTI+ persons. Young LGBTI+ persons should be assured that they will not be discriminated against on the basis of their identity and that they will be welcomed in an inclusive manner.
- Young LGBTI+ persons should take part in decision-making and policy-making mechanisms of human rights mechanisms.
- Feedback from young LGBTI+ persons in the target group or at the beneficiary level on the work carried out should be received.
- The views of young LGBTI+ organisations should be taken into account, regardless of whether they have legal personality or are recognised by administrative institutions.
- New approaches of young people to human rights issues should be recognised. For example, human rights debates in the digital space are highly influential for young people. Human rights organisations should follow the digital field and have a presence in this field.
- Young LGBTI+ rights defenders should be protected from unjust actions due to their advocacy activities, and unjust actions should be prosecuted and compensated. Young LGBTI+ rights defenders may be subjected to unfair acts such as targeting, deprivation of the right to education or employment, economic violence, criminal or disciplinary proceedings, domestic violence.
- Solutions should be found for situations that prevent young LGBTI+ persons from participating in human rights processes. For example, many young people in Turkey hesitate to advocate for their rights due to reasons such as not being able to find a job, being expelled from home or dormitory, loss of economic support provided by the family and the state, disclosure of their identity, detention and arrest.