Defne Güzel, trans human rights defender and chair of May 17 Association, targeted in criminal case in Türkiye

article, anti-gender movement, trans activists

Trans human rights defender Defne Güzel, a founding member and Chairperson of the May 17 Association, is facing a criminal case in Türkiye for allegedly violating the law on associations. She risks facing one to three years of imprisonment and being stripped of her right to elect and be elected in civil society structures only because of her activism.

The indictment follows sweeping audits of LGBTI organisations and targets May 17 Association's publications, including the Turkish translation of OII Europe's publication *#MyIntersexStory* and the *Children, Roe Deer, Flowers, Fires* exhibition catalogue featuring gender non-conforming bodies, branding them 'contrary to public morality'. This routine use of 'public morality' and 'obscenity' provisions is part of a broader strategy to erase LGBTI existence from public life and to intimidate those who defend LGBTI rights, and is a direct attack on democracy in Türkiye.

Defne's case – where an activist has been directly targeted rather than the association – exemplifies a wider and escalating crackdown on the LGBTI associations and trans human rights defenders as well as the rights of trans people in Türkiye. This has intensified with the introduction of the 10th and 11th Judicial Packages, where anti-trans rhetoric has heightened and critical voices and civic freedoms are being suppressed. LGBTI organisations are finding it increasingly challenging to operate in Türkiye and are routinely targeted with criminal charges and unjustified administrative audits, making it impossible for them to function and eventually leading to closure.

We urge Turkish authorities to drop all charges against Defne Güzel and end the use of administrative and judicial harassment of trans human rights defenders.

TGEU stands with Defne. We call on the international community to defend Defne, speak out against the suppression of civic freedoms, amplify Turkish LGBTI organisations, and monitor the trial.

More info

Lawsuit filed seeking prison sentence for 17 May Association Chair Defne Güzel | Chaos GL

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