# Joint LGBTI+ NGO letter to the Turkish Embassy in Berlin, Germany

article, statement & call to action, protection from violence and hate, lgbti, trans activists

On 25 November, TGEU – Trans Europe and Central Asia, OII Europe and OII Germany have sent a joint letter to the German foreign ministries to express serious concerns about the situation in Türkiye and the recent targeting of the LGBTI+ organisations and human rights defenders.

Since 12 September, several police raids have been conducted in Türkiye, targeting LGBTI+ human rights defenders and organisations, as part of the so-called “My Family is Safe” operations. During these raids, police seized digital equipment of the activists and organisations. Websites and social media accounts of LGBTI+ activists and organisations were blocked. 78 people have been in detention for 2 months. On 23 October, in a new wave of arrests, 45 people across 7 provinces were taken into custody and more than 20 of them, including 10 trans women, were imprisoned. Again, on 3 November, 22 people were detained and questioned, several of whom are trans women, in relation to “forming an organisation for the purpose of committing a crime”. Relying on obscenity clauses and provisions on prostitution, Turkish authorities have targeted trans people and sex workers in all waves of the arrests.

Already, in January 2026, Ankara Public Prosecutor’s Office filed a lawsuit against head of the 17 May?s Association Defne Güzel with alleged charges of violating public morality by publishing the Turkish translation of OII Europe’s publication #MyIntersexStory, a collection of testimonies of intersex people, and an exhibition catalogue. The lawsuit followed an expert report from 2025 which concluded that the activities of the 17 May?s Association are entirely consistent with the objectives set out in its statutes and that there are no irregularities whatsoever. Güzel was later acquitted of all charges in the first hearing in May.

## Human rights at stake

These operations mark a significant escalation in the criminalisation of LGBTI+ human rights activism in Türkiye, and a direct attack on freedom of expression, association, and the defence of human rights. The October operations criminalise non-normative identities and bodies, including trans and intersex people and organisations, based only on social media posts declared by the Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office as “contrary to public morality, targeting families, children and young people, detrimental to their development, encouraging gender neutrality and disruptive to public order”.

LGBTI+ organisations in Türkiye are targeted for their legitimate activities. The domestic and international funding they receive is lawful, and they operate as registered associations under Turkish law. With these actions, the Turkish government continues to undermine the right of legally registered organisations to participate in democratic processes.

The ongoing imprisonment of 78 individuals since September, the inhumane prison conditions and the torture perpetrated against them breach international human rights law, as well as the Constitution of Türkiye and the Turkish Penal Code. The European Court of Human Rights and the UN Human Rights Committee have made clear that public morality cannot justify infringing fundamental rights. These operations also institutionalise discrimination and arbitrary detention, fuel a climate of hatred, threaten the right to life of LGBTI+ people, and increase state-sanctioned hate speech.

## Germany’s role

It is clear that the rights of LGBTI+ people in Türkiye and civic freedoms enjoyed by all Turkish citizens are at stake. As a longstanding strategic partner of Türkiye and a vocal critic of Türkiye’s backsliding on rule of law, it is imperative that Germany speaks up and reminds Türkiye of its obligations as a member of the Council of Europe and a candidate country of the EU, to respect fundamental human rights standards that apply to all, no matter a person’s sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics.

As the home to the largest Turkish diaspora, Germany hosts several LGBTI+ human rights defenders, whose work and ability to return to Turkey safely also depends on the end to the targeting of LGBTI+ human rights defenders. As one of the strongest supporters of Türkiye’s accession, Germany should actively support the freedom of association and LGBTI+ human rights in Türkiye.

## Our demands

Therefore, the undersigned organisations operating in Germany urge the German foreign ministries to:

- **Call for the immediate release of all LGBTI+ people and activists imprisoned under the recent operations,**
- **Demand an end to the raids, arrests, and the repression of LGBTI+ civil society in Türkiye,**
- **Use all available diplomatic channels including through your counterparts in Ankara, calling on them to cease the operations and release all those arrested**
- **Raise the concerns over the torture and inhuman and degrading treatment of those arrested with the Turkish authorities, and call for an end to such treatment,**
- **Provide support for the LGBTI+ civil society in Türkiye through the German Embassy in Ankara, including but not limited to funding and creating safe spaces for engagement.**

LGBTI+ rights are human rights and defending and working to protect these rights is not a crime. Ensuring the protection of these rights is the responsibility of all states, including Germany, as a member of the Council of Europe and a signatory to the European Court of Human Rights.

## Your support makes change possible

We work across Europe and Central Asia to advance trans rights, build strong communities, and drive change through research, advocacy, and community-building.

Your donation helps us continue this vital work — defending trans lives, amplifying trans voices, and advocating for justice every day.

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