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LGBTI+ People's Right to Peaceful Assembly:

Monitoring Report on the 2025 Pride Marches in Ankara, İzmir, and Istanbul



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**LGBTI+ People’s Right to Peaceful Assembly:
Monitoring Report on the 2025 Pride Marches in
Ankara, İzmir, and Istanbul**

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Executive Summary

This report documents how the right to peaceful assembly and demonstration of LGBTI+ individuals was systematically targeted and violated by public authorities during the 2025 Pride marches held in Ankara, İzmir, and Istanbul, based on on-site monitoring and field observations. While the Pride marches in Ankara and İzmir concluded without any detentions—largely due to the strategic measures taken by the Pride Week organizing committees and the active presence of lawyers on the ground—the Istanbul Pride March was met with significantly heavier intervention. Not only were participants detained en masse, but individuals who had not taken part in the march were also taken into custody, and instances of ill-treatment were recorded at different stages of the detention process. In 2025, a year marked by an intensified wave of anti-LGBTI+ policies under the banner of the so-called “Year of the Family,” state repression reached a critical turning point. For the first time in the history of Pride marches in Türkiye, three individuals were formally arrested solely on the grounds of participating in a peaceful demonstration. This marks a critical and alarming escalation in the violation of LGBTI+ individuals’ right to peaceful assembly and demonstration, characterized by police interventions that contravene the prohibition of ill-treatment and by judicial harassment orchestrated by public authorities.

1. Introduction

In Türkiye, Pride marches stand as one of the most powerful expressions of the LGBTI+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex, Plus) community’s visibility in public life

and their collective celebration of existence. However, since 2015, this fundamental right has been systematically undermined through a sustained policy of bans and pressure, where disproportionate use of force, arbitrary detentions, and administrative obstacles are deliberately deployed to suppress the freedom of peaceful assembly. For this reason, Pride marches are more than acts of celebration and visibility; they serve as a critical barometer of the state of fundamental rights and freedoms in the country—most notably the freedoms of peaceful assembly and expression. The purpose of this report is to document and analyze the human rights violations that took place during the Pride marches held across Ankara, İzmir, and Istanbul throughout Pride Month 2025, drawing on direct field observations as well as an examination of official actions and decisions. The report first examines the political and legal context surrounding Pride Month, and then presents detailed findings from each city. Finally, it concludes with a comparative analysis of the human rights violations across the three cases, followed by concrete recommendations. The findings of this report are grounded in a standardized, rights-based monitoring methodology.

2. Methodology

The methodology of this report is grounded in established international standards for monitoring peaceful assemblies. The methods employed in the preparation of the report are summarized below.

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- **Field Observation:** Three trained observers were physically present at all three Pride marches, documenting

events in real time. The observers monitored police conduct, participant actions, detention procedures, and the overall atmosphere, in line with the OSCE Guidelines on Monitoring Freedom of Peaceful Assembly.

- **Document Analysis:** Data gathered from the field were comparatively analyzed together with ban decisions issued by provincial and district governorates, police statements, and judicial rulings.
- **Scope:** The scope of this report is limited to the Pride marches held in Ankara on 22 June 2025, in İzmir on 28 June 2025, and in Istanbul on 29 June 2025. The Istanbul Trans Pride March, campus-based Pride marches, and other related demonstrations are not included in the monitoring.
- **International Standards:** The analysis of the identified human rights violations has been conducted within the framework of key international human rights instruments to which Türkiye is a party, including the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).
- **Indicators:** The following indicators were monitored for each city:
 - Date and location of the march
 - Estimated number of participants
 - Presence and type of law enforcement
 - Nature of the intervention
 - Information on detentions and judicial processes
 - Presence of lawyers, bar association representatives, and observers

3. Political and Legal Context: The Climate of Pressure Surrounding Pride Month

The events of Pride Month 2025 took place against a backdrop of increasingly hostile rhetoric and restrictive policies targeting the LGBTI+ community. In the months leading up to the marches, the state implemented a multifaceted strategy of repression that sought to undermine the fundamental rights of LGBTI+ individuals and to criminalize their presence in public spaces.

- **Ideological Front:** Hate Speech from Government Officials: Senior government officials systematically used terms such as “degeneracy” and “genderlessness” when referring to LGBTI+ existence, portraying it as a moral and social threat. President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan stated that Türkiye would fight against what he called “genderlessness policies that have turned into global tyranny”, while Minister of Family and Social Services Mahinur Göktaş employed similar rhetoric, targeting LGBTI+ individuals. This rhetoric has been used to legitimize the state’s anti-LGBTI+ policies and to create a climate conducive to violence.
- **Administrative Front:** Bureaucratic Pressure and Exclusion from Public Life: Administrative pressure and exclusionary practices targeting the LGBTI+ community intensified in the period leading up to Pride Month. The request by the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) for information from medical faculties regarding gender affirmation surgeries was widely interpreted as an act of profiling.. he Ministry of Health’s introduction of a minimum age requirement of 21 for access to hormone treatment constituted a direct interference with

the health rights of trans individuals. At universities, student clubs such as the Hacettepe Queer Studies Society faced closure decisions.

- **Information Front:** Media Censorship and Isolation: The suppression of LGBTI+ voices in public spaces was reinforced through media and internet censorship. Access restrictions imposed on Kaos GL's website and social media accounts severely limited the community's ability to receive information, exercise freedom of expression, and organize, reflecting an attempt to control the public narrative and isolate the community.

This pre-existing climate of hostility and criminalization laid the groundwork for the aggressive official interventions against the Pride marches in the three major cities.

4. City-Based Observations and Findings

This section provides an evidence-based and detailed account of the 2025 Pride marches in Ankara, Istanbul, and İzmir. A comparison of these three cases reveals both the differences in the state's repression strategies and the various forms of resistance developed by activists.

4.1. Ankara Pride March (22 June 2025)

4.1.1. Background

The history of mass LGBTI+ marches in Ankara dates back to the participation of KAOS GL in the May Day demonstrations in 2001 and continued with the May 17 marches (International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia) starting in 2003.

The METU Pride March, held on the Middle East Technical University campus, has continued for over a decade. Although the blanket and indefinite bans imposed on LGBTI+ themed events in 2017 under the state of emergency were later lifted through court rulings Pride marches were significantly disrupted. Since 2021, the Ankara Pride March has resumed; however, due to ongoing interventions and litigation, the location of the march has not been publicly announced by the Ankara Pride Week Committee.

4.1.2. The March

The 2025 Ankara Pride March took place on 22 June 2025. The Ankara Pride Committee did not publicly announce the location of the march; instead, it stated that information would be shared through a closed announcement group. At 16:22, the observer recorded the presence of three riot police vehicles at Kuğulu Park, likely due to the park being the site of the first Ankara Pride March. At 16:29, riot control units and vehicles were also observed in the Atakule area. At 16:35, two riot police officers, one in civilian clothing, were observed entering the Atakule area. At 16:57, approximately 15–20 participants were seen on Reşit Galip Street, identified as the starting point of the march. At 17:12, police officers were observed filming in the area where participants had gathered. The Ankara Pride March began at 17:13. Approximately 100 participants holding rainbow and trans flags marched along Reşit Galip Street, chanting slogans until 17:18. A press statement was read during the march. It was observed that there were not enough riot police officers present to intervene. Participants did not obstruct traffic; vehicle flow and pedestrian movement on both the street and sidewalks continued uninterrupted throughout the

march. After approximately four minutes, members of the committee called on participants to leave their flags behind and disperse, upon which participants placed their flags down and began to disperse. The action ended at 17:18, and the group dispersed. No dispersal warning was issued by law enforcement at any point during the march. At 17:18, individuals believed to be plainclothes police officers were seen recording participants. At 17:19, an individual believed to be a plainclothes police officer was heard speaking on the phone to someone presumed to be his superior, saying: “7019, yes sir. They’ve just made an announcement within the group, and they’re now dispersing into Filistin Street and the side streets.” At 17:21, riot police officers and their superiors were observed arriving at the dispersal point. During this time, one officer was heard saying, “Let’s send backup to Kuğulu.” At 17:22, another officer was heard saying, “I think it’s over.”

At 17:24, riot police officers were observed walking along Nenehatun Street. The 2025 Ankara Pride March concluded without police intervention or detentions

4.2. İzmir Pride March (28 June 2025)

4.2.1. Background

In İzmir, Pride marches have been held for 13 years. For many years, these marches took place without police intervention; however, with the changing political climate in the country, they began to face bans and police interference. Although lawsuits were filed against these bans and some of the bans were overturned, the court rulings had no lasting impact. As a result, the İzmir Pride Week Committee no longer publicly announces the starting location of the march.

4.2.2. Pre-March Process and Ban Decisions

Although the 13th İzmir Pride March was announced under the theme “Çark” (a Lubunca term referring to street-based LGBTI+ visibility and, in some contexts, sex work) to take place on Saturday, 28 June 2025, it was observed that beginning on Monday, 23 June 2025, many of the streets leading into Kibris Şehitleri Street were barricaded by the İzmir police. On Thursday, 26 June 2025, at around 18:00, the İzmir Bar Association shared a legal support hotline, stating: “In connection with Pride Week, you may contact our Bar Association for any detentions or rights violations that may occur during marches and demonstrations in İzmir.”. Shortly after the İzmir Bar Association shared the legal support hotline, between approximately 19:45 and 20:00 on the same day, the Governor’s Office of İzmir published the ban decision on its official websites. According to the ban decision: “It has been observed through press and media outlets and social media platforms that certain LGBTI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex) associations, similar formations, and groups intend to organize events under the name “Pride Week” towards the end of June. It is assessed that such events, which involve certain attitudes and behaviors contrary to general morality, may provoke public reaction, and that individuals and groups holding radical views have already expressed opposition to these planned events through social media and certain press and media platforms. Taking all these circumstances into consideration, it is evaluated that the intended events are highly susceptible to provocations and incidents, and that potential confrontations between groups with differing views may lead to disturbances of public peace and general order. Furthermore, it is considered that public safety and security, personal inviolability, protection of property rights, public

health, public morality, and the rights and freedoms of others — particularly those attending open-air gatherings — may be compromised. For this reason, in order to safeguard public welfare and maintain general public order, prevent the commission of crimes, and protect public health, public morality, and the life and property security of our citizens, all actions and events planned under the name ‘İzmir 13th Pride Week’ — including meetings, marches, press statements, sit-ins, setting up stands/tents, distributing leaflets, hanging posters/banners, protest actions, picnics, festivities, festivals, and similar activities — are hereby banned within the borders of İzmir Province in all open public spaces, for a period of three (3) days, from 27 June 2025 at 00:01 until 29 June 2025 at 23:59, in accordance with Article 11 of the Provincial Administration Law No. 5442 and Article 17 of the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations No. 2911, for the purpose of ensuring public order and national security, preventing the commission of crimes, protecting personal safety, safeguarding individuals’ freedom to work and travel, and preventing possible acts of violence and terrorism.” On Friday, 27 June 2025 -the first working day following the governor’s ban decision-The Young LGBTI+ Association and the İzmir Bar Association filed lawsuits seeking the annulment of the ban, with requests for a stay of execution. The cases were distributed to separate courts. In the case filed by the İzmir Bar Association, the lawyers were informally notified that a decision regarding the request for a stay of execution would not be issued on the same day. In the case filed by the Young LGBTI+ Association, the lawyers were informed that a decision on the request for a stay of execution would be made after the defendant’s response had been received. As a result, no stay of execution decision was issued in either of the lawsuits challenging the governor’s ban on the march.

4.2.3. The March and Intervention

On the day of the march, it was observed that all entry and exit points to the side streets leading to Kıbrıs Şehitleri Street were completely blocked, with a heavy police presence. At 15:45, lawyers waiting to join the area from the İzmir Bar Association building reported that a police team was monitoring the building and its entrance. At 18:45, the Left Party held a march that drew public attention; no intervention took place. At 19:20, a rainbow flag and a trans flag were hung from the offices of Umut-Sen (The Union of Hope) and ESP (The Socialist Party of the Oppressed), located in two opposing buildings on Kıbrıs Şehitleri Street. At 19:21, volunteers from the Pride Week Committee were seen on Kıbrıs Şehitleri Street. At 19:39, it was observed that demonstrators, who had been waiting in nearby stores to avoid drawing attention, gathered and began marching along Kıbrıs Şehitleri Street while chanting the slogan “Neredesin aşkim?” (“Where are you, my love?”). At 19:43, after approximately four minutes of marching, it was observed that police officers blocked the demonstrators’ path. At 19:44, the committee announced the end of the march, and the group of participants was pushed back by police towards the starting point of the march, where another group of officers blocked their way, resulting in the demonstrators and the observer lawyers being encircled. The commanding officer ordered a corridor to be opened and instructed the demonstrators to disperse in groups of three, warning that if they regrouped after dispersing, they would be detained. At around 19:47, demonstrators began to disperse in groups of three through the corridor, each group accompanied by a lawyer to ensure their safety after leaving the area. Around the same time, a detention vehicle arrived at the other side of the encirclement, and a corridor was opened in that direction as

well; however, two lawyers positioned themselves in front of that corridor and redirected the demonstrators to the other corridor due to safety concerns. Between 19:50 and 19:55, the dispersal of the crowd through the corridor was completed. It was then observed that a discussion arose between İzmir Bar Association representatives, a member of parliament, and police commanders regarding the removal of the flags that had been displayed. By the end of the day, no detentions had taken place, and the demonstration had concluded.

4.3. İstanbul Pride March (29 June 2025)

4.3.1. Background

The first planned Pride March in İstanbul, scheduled for 1993 as part of the Sexual Freedom Events Week, could not take place due to bans and detentions imposed by public authorities. The İstanbul Pride March, which began in 2003, was held without intervention until 2015, with participation reaching hundreds of thousands. The Trans Pride March and the Bosphorus Pride March, held on the campus of Bosphorus University, have also been taking place for over a decade. Since 2015, the İstanbul Pride March has faced bans and mass detentions; following the detention of 373 participants in 2022, the İstanbul Pride Week Committee stopped publicly announcing the location of the march, and the march began to take place at different locations across the city.

4.3.2. The Ban Decision

On 27 June 2025, two days before the march, the Kadıköy District Governor's Office announced a two-day ban decision. The content of the decision is as follows: "Information has been obtained through social media accounts that, in

violation of Law No. 2911 on Meetings and Demonstrations, June is being portrayed as so-called Istanbul LGBTI+ Pride Month, and that illegal groups, various non-governmental organizations, political parties, foundations, and associations intend to organize gatherings and actions. Based on social media posts, it has been learned that an event titled 'We Do Not Accept the Restriction of Access to Hormones. To the Istanbul Pride March on June 29 Against Transphobic Policies!' is planned to take place within the boundaries of our district, and that gatherings of a propagandistic nature, including slogans such as 'We Burned the Closet, We Destroyed the Family, Pride Cannot Be Contained; We Do Not Fit into Bans or Families, We Are in the Streets for Our Existence During Pride Month!' may target national, moral, and humanitarian values, thereby threatening social peace. It has been assessed that due to social sensitivities, certain groups may react against participants in such events and actions, and that there is strong evidence indicating a risk of provocation, danger, and imminent threat. In accordance with Articles 17 and 22 of Law No. 2911 on Meetings and Demonstrations, and Article 32/ç of the Provincial Administration Law No. 5442, all gatherings, transportation of participants, marches, press statements, sit-ins, human chains, protest demonstrations, meetings, distribution of leaflets/flyers/brochures, and hanging of posters/banners, as well as the aforementioned event titled 'We Do Not Accept the Restriction of Access to Hormones. To the Istanbul Pride March on June 29 Against Transphobic Policies!' and similar activities planned under the name 'LGBTI+ Pride Month' on Saturday, 28 June 2025, and Sunday, 29 June 2025, have been deemed inappropriate and are BANNED in all open public areas within the jurisdiction of

our District Governor's Office from 00:01 on 28.06.2025 until 23:59 on 29.06.2025 (for a period of 2 days).”

On 28 June 2025, just one day before the march, the Beyoğlu District Governor's Office also announced a general 24-hour ban. The content of the decision is as follows: “It has been understood from certain social media accounts that calls have been made to gather on 29.06.2025. Considering that the planned gatherings may lead to actions that could disrupt public order and social peace, and pursuant to Article 17 of Law No. 2911 on Meetings and Demonstrations and Article 32(g) of the Provincial Administration Law No. 5442, all activities such as meetings and demonstrations, press statements, distribution of leaflets, and sit-in protests are hereby BANNED in all open public areas within the jurisdiction of our District Governor's Office for a 24-hour period starting at 00:01 on 29.06.2025. As part of the measures to be taken, it has been decided to place barriers around the Republic Monument in Taksim Square; to close Taksim Square, Gezi Park, Siraselviler Street, and İstiklal Avenue up to Tünel Square—including all connected side streets—to both pedestrian and vehicle traffic, with controlled passage to be allowed if necessary; and, taking into account potential public incidents that may occur within the district on the same day, to close pedestrian and vehicle traffic at other locations within district boundaries if deemed necessary”

There was no publicly announced ban decision issued by the Istanbul Governorship; however, on 28 June, the Governor of Istanbul made the following statement on the social media platform X: “ Certain marginal groups have been observed making calls for gatherings and marches on social media. No permission has been granted for these calls, which target public peace, the family structure, and

moral values. No gathering or march that threatens public order will be tolerated, and all necessary measures will be taken by the relevant authorities. #Istanbul”

Metro Istanbul also issued a statement on the same day, announcing the transportation lines that the Governorship had decided to suspend due to the march: “In line with the decision taken by the Governorship of Istanbul, as of 10:00 a. m. on Sunday, 29 June 2025, and until further notice:

- The Taksim and Şişhane stations on our M2 Yenikapı–Hacıosman Metro Line,
- The Fulya and Yıldız stations on our M7 Yıldız–Mahmutbey Metro Line, and
- Our F1 Taksim–Kabataş Funicular Line

will be closed to operation.

On the M2 line, trains will continue service without stopping at Taksim and Şişhane stations. On the M7 line, services will operate between Mecidiyeköy and Mahmutbey.”

4.3.3. The March and Intervention

The 2025 Istanbul Pride March took place on 29 June 2025. One day prior to the march, the Socialist Party of the Oppressed (ESP) announced that two of its members had been detained for hanging an LGBTI+ flag on the Haliç Bridge. The Istanbul Pride Week Committee did not publicly announce the location of the march, stating instead that information would be shared through a closed notification group. On 29 June, around midday, Taksim Square and Gezi Park were observed to be completely cordoned off by police. At 14:50, LGBTI+ activists were observed in Beşiktaş. At 14:54, approximately 10–15 people were seen gathered

on Hülya Street, carrying rainbow flags and various flags representing LGBTI+ identities. The group began chanting slogans and reading out a press statement. Member of Parliament Kezban Konukçu was also observed at the scene. The press statement lasted approximately two and a half minutes. At 14:57, the group dispersed upon the arrival of police. Individuals were seen dropping their flags as they left. Plainclothes police officers were then seen running after members of the dispersed group following the press statement. At this stage, it was observed that the police had blocked off Hülya Street and placed a group under containment. At 14:59, an officer was heard saying, “Don’t let anyone through—secure this area.” At 15:00, police were heard telling people recording the scene, “Stop filming,” and it was observed that Member of Parliament Kezban Konukçu was prevented by police officers from approaching those who had been detained. At 15:01, a bystander, reacting to the police presence, was heard ironically saying, “Hurry, hurry— those are the real criminals!” At 15:04, the police started pushing away individuals present in the area who were not part of the march and raised their shields to block visibility of those being held. At 15:05, an officer was heard telling people recording, “Do you have a press card? Why are you filming?” At 15:19, a local resident, trying to make sense of the situation, was heard saying, “All these police for LGBT? Could be terrorism or something.” Even though the small group of demonstrators had already been detained, it was observed that there was still a heavy police presence on Dereboyu Street. At 15:22, it was observed that unrelated bystanders were also being removed from the street and that access through certain points was being restricted. At 15:28, it was observed that people on Bulgurcu Street were being directed away from the area. At 15:49, an

officer was heard stating, “Seventeen detainees.” At 16:40, when lawyers attempted to obtain information from the Beşiktaş District Police Department, police officers were heard saying, “No one has been brought here, they wouldn’t come here anyway, procedures aren’t carried out here—maybe they’ll be transferred by vehicle, probably to Vatan.”

4.3.4. Hospital and Medical Examination Procedures

It was observed that some of the detainees were brought to Bayrampaşa State Hospital at approximately 16:45. The medical examinations conducted as part of the detention procedure lasted on average about one minute per person. During transport from the vehicle to the examination room and back, individuals were kept in reverse handcuffs. It was also observed that even individuals who were permitted to leave the detention vehicle to use the restroom were escorted to and from the facilities while still in reverse handcuffs. Law enforcement officers did not allow observers to watch the medical examination procedures at closer range. At 19:03, it was observed that detainees at Bayrampaşa State Hospital began chanting slogans, including “They’ve started using reverse handcuffs—human dignity will defeat torture.” Following these chants, police officers were seen closing the doors of the detention vehicles. It was further observed that lawyers present at the scene were not permitted to meet with the detainees, nor was the request to meet with detained lawyers accepted.

4.3.5. Police Custody and Interrogation Procedures

At 21:27, it was observed that lawyers arriving at Vatan Police Headquarters were not allowed to meet with their detained clients. At 22:19, it was observed that lawyers

who had been permitted inside the building for statement procedures were being instructed to leave. At 23:00, a verbal dispute was observed between lawyers who had not been let in and police officers. At 23:10, it was observed that only some of the lawyers were allowed to enter. When lawyers requested to see their clients in the detention vehicles prior to statement procedures, the request was rejected by the commanding officer, who was heard saying, “Absolutely not, absolutely not.” Following the verbal dispute, the police chief was heard saying, “Fine then, we won’t take any statements. I’ll keep them in custody, get an extension from the prosecutor—you can come back in five hours.” At 23:29, lawyers were called in to meet with detainees for statement procedures. At 23:35, police officers stated that all detainees would be held under custody. At 23:38, lawyers’ request to bring food for a detainee with celiac disease was rejected by police, who stated that not even packaged food would be accepted. Procedures continued into the following day, 30 June 2025. At 00:07, it was observed that the number of detainees had reached 53. At 00:22, when a lawyer attempted to record in the minutes that screams were coming from the detention vehicles and that statements were being taken in that environment, statement-taking was halted, and the concerned lawyer was escorted outside by police. At 00:37, during questioning, it was observed that suspects were asked about their personal backgrounds, association and union memberships, social media accounts, and were accused of failing to disperse despite being shown the ban decision and receiving a warning to do so. At 02:56, it was observed that one suspect stated during interrogation that police officers had said to them, “We are disgusted by you.” At 03:55, another suspect stated that while detainees were being held in reverse handcuffs inside

the detention vehicle, police officers said, “If you need the bathroom, raise your hand.” At 04:43, it was heard that the commanding officer declared the statement-taking procedures concluded and stated, “I’m not letting you meet them again—enough, you’ve met them enough since this morning. I won’t allow it anymore. Go ahead and file a complaint if you want.”

4.3.6. Courthouse and Referral Procedures

During ongoing observation on 30 June, it was noted at 13:04 that individuals brought to Bayrampaşa State Hospital for post-statement medical examinations were taken out of the vehicle in reverse handcuffs and later returned to the vehicle in the same manner. At 13:15, it was observed that police were recording the entries and exits of the examination area. At 14:09, during a brief consultation with one of the detained lawyers, the lawyer reported that detainees were taken to the medical examination area in standard handcuffs while being recorded on camera but were again handcuffed in reverse upon being returned to the vehicle, and that one detainee had suffered a panic attack and became physically rigid, but no medical intervention was provided. At 15:02, it was observed that the front area of Çağlayan Courthouse, where detainees had been brought, was closed off and access was restricted. At 15:03, it was learned that three detainees were referred with a request for arrest, while the others were referred with requests for judicial control measures, specifically international travel bans. At 15:10, it was observed that lawyers were unable to meet with the prosecutor and were not granted access to the detention area where the detainees were being held. At 15:15, it was learned that those referred with requests for

judicial control (travel bans) would be decided upon based on the case file without a hearing. At 16:06, it was reported that the Magistrate’s Court had issued judicial control orders—including travel bans—for all individuals referred on that basis. It was seen that in the referral and interrogation documents, the investigation was being conducted by the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor’s Office, Terror Crimes Investigation Bureau. At 16:32, it was observed that lawyers waiting for their clients who had been released under judicial control were directed inside by police, despite being outside the courthouse, and once inside, were told to leave. At 16:35, it was observed that lawyers waiting inside the courthouse for their released clients were again instructed to exit the building. At 17:04, it was observed that relatives waiting to meet the released individuals were not allowed to greet them. At 17:15, it was observed that those present in front of Çaçlayan Courthouse were shown a seven-day ban decision issued by the Kağıthane District Governor’s Office. At 17:16, it was learned that the three individuals referred with arrest requests had been detained on the grounds that “there are ongoing investigations and prosecutions against them for similar and other offenses”.

4.3.7. Subsequent Developments

Following the protest and detention/arrest processes, several developments were reported in the media. On 30 June, despite general ban decisions, a group in Beyoğlu held a demonstration chanting pro-sharia slogans. On 1 July, two of the three individuals who had been arrested were subjected to strip searches upon entry to prison. On 2 July, a Bosphorus University student was detained for carrying an LGBTI+ flag. In the ensuing period, a lawsuit was filed

against participants of the Istanbul Pride March. As of the publication date of this report, the case remains ongoing, while the three individuals who had been detained have since been released.

5. Comparative Analysis and Human Rights Violations

A thematic assessment of the city-based accounts reveals that, although implemented with varying levels of intensity, the interventions targeting the 2025 Pride Marches in all three cities constitute a systematic state policy. In Ankara, activists successfully avoided police intervention through an effective evasion strategy, bypassing preventive policing measures. In İzmir, arbitrary detentions were averted through a negotiated dispersal strategy led by lawyers. In Istanbul, however, the state employed a markedly repressive approach, responding even to a symbolic press statement with disproportionate force, mass and arbitrary detentions, and arrests.

Comparison Table: 2025 Ankara, İzmir and Istanbul Pride Marches

	City						
Istanbul	Ankara	İzmir	Ankara	İzmir	Ankara	İzmir	Ankara
29.06.2025	22.06.2025	28.06.2025	22.06.2025	28.06.2025	22.06.2025	28.06.2025	22.06.2025
~3 mins.	~5 mins.	~4 mins.	~5 mins.	~4 mins.	~5 mins.	~4 mins.	~5 mins.
- Kadıköy District Governor's (2-day ban) - Beyoğlu District Governor's (24-hour ban) - Kağıthane District Governor's (7-day ban) - Governor's public statement - Transport restrictions by Governorship	No publicly accessible ban decision; de facto restrictions	Provincial Governor's Office (3-day ban)	No publicly accessible ban decision; de facto restrictions	Provincial Governor's Office (3-day ban)	No publicly accessible ban decision; de facto restrictions	Provincial Governor's Office (3-day ban)	No publicly accessible ban decision; de facto restrictions
~15	~100	~40	~100	~40	~100	~40	~100
Heavy police intervention and violations of the prohibition of ill-treatment	No intervention	Containment, blockade, dispersal	No intervention	Containment, blockade, dispersal	No intervention	Containment, blockade, dispersal	No intervention
53 (including non-participants)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3 arrests, 50 judicial control orders (international travel bans)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Based on these findings, the fundamental rights violations can be examined under the following headings:

- Violation of the Right to Peaceful Assembly and Demonstration: The right to peaceful assembly, guaranteed under Article 34 of the Constitution and Article 11 of the ECHR, was systematically violated in İzmir and Istanbul through preventive and generalized ban decisions issued by the Governor's Offices. In Ankara, although police

attempted to obstruct the march, these efforts were ultimately unsuccessful. Unlike İzmir and Istanbul, the restriction in Ankara was carried out not through an administrative ban decision but through de facto obstruction by law enforcement. These prohibitions were not based on a concrete and imminent security threat. Instead, as in the case of İzmir, they were legitimized using vague and discriminatory grounds such as “public morality.” In Istanbul, the complete closure of symbolic public spaces such as Taksim Square amounted to a de facto ban that nullified the very essence of the right to peaceful assembly.

● Violation of Freedom of Expression:

Pride Marches serve as a platform where the LGBTI+ community peacefully expresses its identities, demands, and existence in the public sphere. The confiscation of rainbow and trans flags, the criminalization of peaceful slogans and banner messages- such as “Yaşamda İsrar!” (“Insisting on Life!”)—and their inclusion as evidence of criminal conduct in indictments constitute a direct interference with freedom of expression. Through these actions, the state not only suppresses public assemblies but also criminalizes the public expression of LGBTI+ identity and demands. This stance represents a clear violation of freedom of expression as protected under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

● Violation of the Prohibition of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment: In Istanbul, the intervention reached a level that clearly amounted to inhuman and degrading treatment, in violation of Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights. Documented

findings include the prolonged use of reverse hand-cuffing, denial of access to basic needs such as water and toilets inside detention vehicles, physical force, and the use of degrading language by police officers—such as “We are disgusted by you.” It was further recorded that detainees held in reverse handcuffs inside the police vehicle were mockingly told by an officer, “If you need the bathroom, raise your hand.” The attitude of law enforcement was encapsulated in a statement made by a police chief to a lawyer who had been subjected to ill-treatment: “You brought this on yourself”. These statements and actions reveal a mindset in which the exercise of constitutional rights is perceived as provocation, and therefore punishment is seen as justified—an approach fundamentally incompatible with the absolute prohibition of torture and ill-treatment.

- **Criminalization of Human Rights Advocacy:** The judicial process following the detentions in Istanbul marks a qualitative shift in the state’s repression strategy. The imposition of international travel bans on more than 50 individuals—without any individualized assessment—and, most notably, the arrest of three activists solely for participating in a peaceful march, for the first time in Turkey’s history, demonstrates that state intervention has moved beyond police repression and has evolved into a tool of judicial harassment and criminalization.
- **Violation of the Right to a Fair Trial:** The obstruction of lawyers’ timely access to their clients during detention, the interruption and prevention of statements referring to ill-treatment, and attempts to expel lawyers from the Police Directorate building constitute clear violations of the right to defence—one of the core components

of the right to a fair trial. The state's strategy extended beyond restricting the rights of detainees; it also involved targeting lawyers themselves, with the apparent intent of preventing the documentation of violations and hindering legal challenges.

- **Violation of Freedom of Movement:** The transportation restrictions imposed by the Istanbul Governorship and district governorates not only affected those participating in or intending to join the Pride March, but also disrupted the daily lives of numerous residents, thereby infringing upon individuals' freedom of movement.
- **Violation of the Prohibition of Discrimination:** Throughout Pride Month 2025, administrative authorities issued a series of blanket ban decisions that fundamentally violated the right to peaceful assembly. The language used in these decisions clearly reveals the discriminatory nature of the violations. Expressions such as "so-called Istanbul LGBTI+ Pride Month," "may harm national, moral or humanitarian values and threaten social peace," and "these types of events, which include attitudes and behaviors contrary to public morality, may provoke societal reactions," serve to delegitimize LGBTI+ existence and justify their exclusion from the public sphere. These decisions were reinforced and legitimized by discriminatory rhetoric from high-ranking public officials. In his public statement prior to the march, the Governor of Istanbul, Davut Gül, referred to Pride participants as "marginal groups" who allegedly "target social peace, the family structure, and moral values," thereby adopting an exclusionary and discriminatory stance toward LGBTI+ people. Such language not only violates the principle

of equality but also contributes to an environment that encourages further rights violations.

6. Conclusion

For more than a decade, Pride Marches in the three major metropolitan cities- each rooted in longstanding traditions of struggle- have been subjected to bans and interventions aimed at suppression by public authorities. Despite this pressure, Pride committees continue to march each year; however, as a security measure, the march routes are no longer publicly announced. The need to conceal the location on security grounds and share it only with a limited number of participants has significantly restricted participation and demonstrates the deterrent effect of years of sustained police intervention. In 2025, the absence of police intervention in the Ankara and İzmir Pride Marches did not stem from any form of tolerance or discretion on the part of law enforcement or administrative authorities. Rather, it was the result of strategic planning by the organizers, who adopted security-conscious approaches to exercise their right to protest, thereby limiting the opportunity for police intervention. In both cities, the marches began in locations and at moments with minimal police presence, lasted no more than five minutes following the reading of the press statement, and ended swiftly based on the committee's instructions to disperse before law enforcement could intervene. In İzmir in particular, the absence of detentions can be attributed to the presence and influence of lawyers on the ground. In the case of Istanbul, however, the extraordinary security measures imposed across the city since 19 March translated into intensive police surveillance and intervention

targeting the Pride March. Even though the action involved no more than 10–15 people and lasted barely three minutes, it was still met with heavy police intervention. Moreover, many individuals who had not participated in the march—or had no connection to it—were also detained. What distinguishes 2025 from previous years is that detainees were held in custody, all individuals subjected to detention—regardless of their involvement—were issued judicial control orders in the form of international travel bans without individualized assessment, and, for the first time in the 30-year history of Pride Marches in Türkiye, individuals were arrested on the sole basis of having participated in a peaceful Pride action. This demonstrates the increasing pressure exerted by administrative authorities, law enforcement, and judicial bodies on Pride Marches—one of the most fundamental forms of protest for LGBTI+ communities—and reveals the deepening scope of rights violations. At the same time, despite escalating restrictions, the LGBTI+ movement continues to demonstrate resilience, persistently asserting its fundamental rights and developing creative strategies to do so.

7. Recommendations

- To State Authorities and Law Enforcement:
 - All blanket and preventive bans imposed on peaceful Pride Marches must be immediately lifted.
 - Independent, impartial, and effective investigations must be conducted into all documented allegations of torture, ill-treatment, and disproportionate use

of force by law enforcement, and those responsible must be held accountable.

- To Members of the Judiciary:
 - Prosecutors and judges must refrain from pursuing investigations and prosecutions that criminalize individuals for exercising their right to peaceful assembly.
 - All charges brought against individuals solely for participating in Pride Marches should be dropped, and compensation mechanisms should be applied for unlawful detention and arrest processes.
- To the International Community:
 - International human rights monitoring bodies should continue to closely monitor the deterioration of the right to peaceful assembly in Türkiye and apply diplomatic pressure on Turkish authorities to comply with their international human rights obligations.

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