

URGENT ACTION

PRIDE MARCH MUST BE ALLOWED TO GO AHEAD

A student-organised Pride march, is due to take place on 11 May, on the Ankara based Middle East Technical University (ODTÜ) campus, but is at risk of being blocked by the Ankara Governorate and university authorities, in violation of the right to freedom of assembly. The march must be allowed to go ahead and the ongoing blanket ban on all LGBTI events in Ankara lifted.

An annual student-organised Pride march, is due to take place on 11 May, on the Middle East Technical University (ODTÜ) campus in Ankara, but is at risk of being blocked by the Ankara Governorate and university authorities. According to the LGBTI student group and march organisers, **ODTÜ LGBTI Dayanışması**, in early April, the university authorities informed the Ankara Governorate of the student's annual spring festival, which this year takes place from 9 – 11 May, and the Pride march, on 11 May. The Governorate responded that both the festival and march could not go ahead because of risk of 'provocation'.

The annual spring festival has been organized by student groups at ODTÜ for the last 31 years and is a celebration of different cultures. For the last seven years, the Pride march has been taking place on the day after the festival, with the support of a wide range of student groups. This year, ODTÜ LGBTI are also planning a week of events, including a 'queer salsa dance' and a collective rainbow painting event, starting on 7 May.

ODTÜ LGBTI told Amnesty International that the University's Rector told them on 26 April that he would make representations to the Governorate for the festival to go ahead but would not negotiate in favour of the Pride march. On the same day, an article in a pro-government newspaper referred to the march and its organisers as "deviants [who] are planning on displaying their lack of morals under the slogan 'we are everywhere, we are the country' without regard to religious sensitivities a short time before the start of Ramadan".

An indefinite blanket ban by Ankara Governorate on all LGBTI events in Ankara has been in effect since November 2017. The right to peaceful assembly is guaranteed under domestic and international law. To be lawful, any restrictions on this right must be necessary and proportionate, meaning that there must be a pressing social need, in order to protect a legitimate concern. The ongoing indefinite blanket ban on all LGBTI events in Ankara is therefore unlawful, which includes any blocking of the ODTÜ students' march for Pride.

Please write immediately in Turkish, English or your own language:

- Calling on the Governor of Ankara to ensure that the student's Pride march can go ahead without unlawful restrictions, and to immediately and unconditionally lift the indefinite blanket ban on all LGBTI events in Ankara;
- Calling on the Rector of the Middle East Technical University to ensure that the Pride march planned for 11 May takes place without any unlawful restrictions imposed on it.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 14 JUNE 2018 TO:

Governor of Ankara

Mr Ercan Topaca

T.C. Ankara Valiliği Ulus/ANKARA

Email: ankarabilgi@icisleri.gov.tr

Twitter: @TopacaErcan

Salutation: **Dear Governor**

Rector of Middle East Technical

University

Prof. Dr. Mustafa Verşan Kök

Fax: +90 312 210 1105

Email: kok@metu.edu.tr

rektor@metu.edu.tr

Salutation: **Dear Professor Kök**

And copies to:

General Secretary of Middle East

Technical University

Mr Türker Özkan

Fax: +90 312 210 1105

Email: ozturker@metu.edu.tr

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. HIS EXCELLENCY MR ABDURRAHMAN BİLGİÇ, Embassy of the Republic of Turkey, 43 Belgrave Square SW1X 8PA, 020 7393 0202, embassy.london@mfa.gov.tr

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



URGENT ACTION

PRIDE MARCH MUST BE ALLOWED TO GO AHEAD

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Since 18 November 2017, an indefinite blanket ban imposed by the Governorate of Ankara on all LGBTI events has been in effect, introduced under the ongoing state of emergency in the country in place since the failed coup attempt of July 2016. LGBTI organizations and activists in Ankara speak of the devastating impact of the ban, forcing the once vibrant and growing movement to near invisibility. Ankara based LGBTI organizations, KAOS GL and Pink Life are mounting legal challenges to the ban, which are ongoing.

The LGBTI student group ODTÜ LGBTI was established in 1996 and has been requesting formal recognition from university authorities ever since it was founded, which has still not been granted. The group has been actively defying the ongoing blanket ban on LGBTI events in Ankara since last November and are calling for international solidarity to ensure that the Pride march takes place for the eighth consecutive year.

Gender m/f: all

UA: 83/18 Index: EUR 44/8339/2018 Issue Date: 3 May 2018