

# URGENT ACTION

## LIFT BAN AND PROTECT ISTANBUL PRIDE MARCHES

**On 17 June the Governorship of Istanbul announced that the Trans Pride and the Istanbul Pride marches, planned for 19 and 26 June respectively, were banned for security reasons. The authorities are denying LGBTI people and their allies their right to peaceful assembly.**

The Governorship of Istanbul announced on 17 June that the Trans Pride and the Istanbul Pride marches, which were planned for 19 and 26 June respectively, were banned for security reasons. The organizing committee of the Istanbul Pride had been in discussions with the governor's office, to ensure that **tens of thousands of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people and their allies** can march peacefully and securely and are not prevented from exercising their right to freedom of expression and assembly.

In 2015 the governor banned the Istanbul Pride march due to an apparent lack of formal notification and risk of "provocations" between participants and counter-demonstrators planning to target the Pride. However, Pride organizers were not informed and so the march went ahead. Police used tear gas, water cannons and pepper-ball projectiles, preventing marchers from fully participating. Organizers of the 2016 Istanbul Pride march have been calling for the authorities to provide adequate security to ensure that threats circulating on social media do not lead to counter demonstrators targeting the marches with violent attacks. Amnesty International met with the Deputy Istanbul Governor on 16 June and called for the authorities to ensure that this year's Pride marches can take place securely and peacefully, in line with the right to freedom of peaceful assembly.

Following the announcement of the ban, Trans Pride organizers have stated their intention of going ahead with the march on 19 June. The Istanbul Pride organizing committee is considering their response. Amnesty International is planning to send human rights observers to the Pride marches.

### Please write immediately in Turkish or your own language:

- Calling on the Turkish authorities to immediately reverse the ban on Istanbul Pride and Trans Pride;
- Urging them to respect the right to peaceful assembly and ensure that LGBTI individuals and their allies can take part in Pride marches on 19 June and 26 June without fear of violence or harassment;
- Calling on them to ensure that police do not use force against Pride participants exercising their rights to peaceful assembly;
- Urging them to state publicly that they will ensure annual Pride marches can take place and that they will provide all the necessary measures to ensure the security of participants.

### PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 29 JULY 2016 TO:

Istanbul Governor  
Mr Vasip Şahin  
İstanbul Valiliği - Ankara Caddesi  
34110 Cağaloğlu-Fatih  
İstanbul, Turkey  
Fax: +90 212 512 20 86  
Twitter: @vasipsahin  
**Salutation: Dear Governor**

Minister of Interior  
Mr Efkana Ala  
T.C. İçişleri Bakanlığı  
Bakanlıklar  
06580, Ankara, Turkey  
Fax: +90 312 418 1795  
Twitter: @efkanala  
**Salutation: Dear Minister**

**And copies to:**  
Prime Ministry Human Rights Board  
Dr. Hikmet TÜLEN  
İnsan Hakları Başkanı  
Yüksel Caddesi No:23, Kat 3  
Yenişehir  
06650 Ankara, Turkey  
Fax: +90 (312) 422 29 96  
Email: tihk@tihk.gov.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](mailto:embassy.london@mfa.gov.tr)**

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

**AMNESTY  
INTERNATIONAL**



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### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Pride marches have taken place in Istanbul annually since 2003. In stark contrast with Turkish authorities' use of homophobic and transphobic rhetoric and a refusal to prohibit discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity in law, lesbian, bisexual, gay, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) groups in Turkey had been able to exercise their right to freedom of assembly without arbitrary restrictions - with an estimated 90,000 people taking part in Istanbul. However, in 2015 the Istanbul Pride march was prevented from taking place on the day, despite conversations between Pride representatives and the authorities in the weeks leading up to the march. Police used excessive and unnecessary force including tear gas, water cannons and pepper ball projectiles against peaceful Pride marchers. The next day, the Istanbul governor justified the authorities' actions, stating that no formal notification for the assembly was submitted [as required in Turkey's law] and the authorities had received information that counter-demonstrators may target the pride. He stated that proportionate force was used because demonstrators failed to disperse after having been warned to do so by law enforcement.

Lawyers for the LGBTI organizations have filed a criminal complaint about the police's use of excessive force against peaceful Pride marchers. The prosecutor requested the Istanbul governor's permission for a criminal investigation [as required in law], which he refused to grant. A legal challenge to the governor's decision at the administrative court by the LGBTI organizations was also unsuccessful.

This year, on 20 May, the Ankara governor banned a march to commemorate the International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOT), planned to take place on 22 May, claiming that "certain groups could react and there could be provocations directed at the participants of the march due to social sensibilities". The organizers successfully challenged the governor's decision in court, but the ban was ultimately upheld after a last minute appeal by the governor. Izmir Pride march on 4 June was also banned by the governor of Izmir, citing intelligence they had received of violent acts that would be carried out and slogans would be shouted on behalf of 'unlawful terrorist organizations'. Despite the ban, on the day, around 100 people gathered to celebrate Pride and no violence was recorded.

The right to peaceful assembly imposes obligations on the state, including to provide adequate security measures, and that the onus falls on the authorities to ensure that peaceful assemblies can go ahead. Notification requirements should not be used as a means for the authorities to frustrate the ability to hold assemblies, but rather to ensure that proper preparations are put in place.

Currently there are 45 cases pending execution in the *Oya Ataman group* of cases where European Court of Human Rights has found Turkey to have violated the right to peaceful assembly.

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