

Turkey acquits 19 LGBTI+ Pride marchers, honouring fundamental human rights, domestic law, and international commitments

[News, Turkey](#)

Leading European LGBTI rights organisation, ILGA-Europe welcomes the decision of a Turkish court to acquit 19 activists, who were charged with “unlawful assembly” for their participation in a peaceful LGBTI+ Pride march in 2019.

Today 18 students and one academic who were detained, charged and prosecuted for their participation in a peaceful LGBTI+ Pride march at Turkey’s Middle East Technical University (METU) in the city of Ankara on 10 May 2019 were acquitted, having faced charges of “participating in an unlawful assembly” and “failing to disperse despite being warned” and up to three years in prison.

In 2017, Ankara banned all LGBTI+ activities under a state of emergency, but this ban had been lifted in February 2019. Therefore, there was no legal basis for METU’s administration to ban the march in May 2019. Activists and students exercised their legal right to freedom of assembly, celebrating Pride, however, at the university’s behest, police intervened and used excessive force to disperse the march, detaining 22 participants, of which 19 were charged.

Today the judge at Ankara’s 39th Penal Court of First Instance found the activists not guilty due to the absence of any element of a crime, and confirmed that Pride is not a crime. The official reasoning for his decision will be published in November.

According to Katrin Hugendubel, Advocacy Director at ILGA-Europe: “We are very relieved to hear of the acquittal of the METU Pride LGBTI+ activists. It is very important for LGBTI+ people in Turkey, but also across the region, to see that, in a context of rising hate-speech against LGBTI+ people by political and religious leaders, the courts and judicial processes protect the rights of all people to freedom of assembly, as enshrined in Turkish law and the European Convention on Human Rights, to which Turkey is party, and thus uphold the rule of law.”

According to Özgür Gür, from the Turkish NGO, ÜniKuir, who was one of the activists facing judgement in the trial: “We would like to point out that from the very beginning, there should have been no trial at all, and now, with this precedent, we will continue to raise the LGBTI+ struggle. We thank everyone for their support.”