

URGENT ACTION

METU PRIDE MUST BE ALLOWED TO PROCEED

On 7 June, the rectorship of the Ankara based Middle East Technical University (METU) sent an email to all students, declaring the campus-based Pride march on 10 June 'categorically banned', threatening the participants with police intervention if the march proceeds. The rectorship's action represents an unjustifiable attempt to restrict the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly of METU students and staff and must be reversed.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Rector of Middle East Technical University
Prof. Dr. Mustafa Verşan K k
Fax: +90 312 210 1105
Email: kok@metu.edu.tr / rektor@metu.edu.tr

Dear Prof Dr Mustafa Verşan K k,

I write to call on you to reverse your decision to 'categorically ban' the peaceful campus-based Pride march, planned for Friday 10 June 2022. The grounds cited in your email sent to all METU students on 7 June, namely the 'damage that would be caused to the University's prestige' are not among those permitted under T rkiye's domestic laws, nor are they permissible under binding international human rights laws and standards.

In May 2019, during the last campus-based peaceful march, 18 students and one academic staff who were detained by police who used unnecessary and excessive force. They were prosecuted for their participation in the march but acquitted in their trial heard by the Ankara Penal Court of First Instance No 39 in October 2021. In the light of this court decision, any attempt to prevent this peaceful assembly would represent a new and serious restriction on those who wish to exercise their rights.

I therefore urge you to ensure that all participants in METU Pride, students and staff, are able to exercise their right to peaceful assembly on 10 June freely and without fear of reprisal or punishment.

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Amnesty International has seen an email sent by the METU administration on 7 June to all of the university's students, attempting to prohibit the planned Pride march, stating that it 'has been absolutely banned' and threatening students with police intervention if they go ahead with their plans to have a peaceful demonstration.

The email claims that the university has a peaceful, productive, and creative academic environment, and that their reputation is being threatened by their students demonstrating in a nonviolent manner during Pride Month.

On 10 May 2019, the last time METU's students and academic staff attempted to hold a peaceful Pride March in the campus, they were [met](#) with excessive police force, forbidden from marching and charged with "participating in an unlawful assembly" and "refusing to disperse despite being warned". At least 21 students and staff were detained and 19 among them were prosecuted in a trial that ended with their acquittal in October 2021.

States have a positive obligation to facilitate peaceful assemblies in law and in practice. As is the case in Turkish law, the exercise of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly is not subject to permission of government authorities, this right is also protected under international law and standards in conventions Turkey is a party to. Any decision to disperse an assembly should be taken only as a last resort and carefully in line with the principles of necessity and proportionality, that is only when there are no other means available to protect a legitimate aim which outweighs the right of people to assemble peacefully. In any such situation, police must, as far as possible, avoid any use of force and, in any event, must always restrict it to the minimum level necessary.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: [Turkish, English]

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 10 June 2022

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: [Enter Name] they (group of students)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: n/a