

# URGENT ACTION

## LGBTI+ RIGHTS DEFENDERS ON TRIAL

Emirhan Şaşmaz, Kerem Dikmen and nine other members of the executive and supervisory boards of Izmir-based Genç LGBTI+ association are on trial for violating the Law on Associations, a law that governs civil society groups and can be used to restrict their activities or even dissolve them. They are also accused of having acted in contravention of Article 41 of the Constitution, which protects “family and children’s rights.” In December 2025, in a separate lawsuit, the İzmir Civil Court of First Instance No. 3 ordered the dissolution of Genç LGBTI+, a decision now pending appeal. These actions violate freedom of association and discriminate against LGBTI+ individuals. We call on Turkish authorities to drop all charges and uphold human rights.

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

**Izmir Chief Public Prosecutor  
Ali Yeldan**

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Dear Chief Public Prosecutor

*I am writing to express serious concerns regarding the prosecution of **Emirhan Şaşmaz, Kerem Dikmen and nine other members** of the executive and supervisory boards of the Izmir-based Genç LGBTI+ association. The association and its leadership face legal action for their lawful advocacy and community activities, which are alleged to have violated Article 41 of the Constitution of Türkiye on the protection of family and children’s rights, and therefore considered to be in breach of Article 32/1(p) of the Law on Associations.*

*In December 2025, the İzmir Civil Court of First Instance No. 3 ruled to dissolve Genç LGBTI+, citing ‘obscenity’ in a few illustrations shared on the association’s social media accounts between 2019 and 2022. The Association was initially unaware of key hearings due to improper service, highlighting procedural unfairness. It is worth noting that these allegations were previously investigated and dismissed by the Cyber Crimes Bureau because the posts did not constitute a criminal offence.*

*Accusations of ‘obscenity’ and the weaponization of vague ‘morality’ laws that have led to the summary decision to close the association and the prosecution of its board members on similar grounds represent an unlawful restriction of their right to freedom of association and expression.*

**We urge you to immediately drop all the criminal charges against Genç LGBTI+ board members and uphold Türkiye’s obligations under international human rights law.**

Yours sincerely,

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The process of dissolution of Genç LGBTI+ began with a 2024 audit of the association by the Ministry of Interior. The audit report alleged that five separate posts on the Association's social media were in breach of Article 226/2 of the penal code, criminalizing 'obscenity' and in violation of Article 41 of the Constitution pertaining to protection of the family and children.

On 10 December 2024, the İzmir Governorship filed a complaint with the İzmir Chief Public Prosecutor's Office about the five illustrations shared on Genç LGBTI+ Association's social media accounts between 2019 and 2022. The Governorship requested that a criminal investigation be initiated on the grounds of "obscenity" and that dissolution proceedings be brought against the Association. Following this complaint, the Prosecutor's Office launched an investigation under Article 226/2 of the Turkish Penal Code and the relevant provisions of the Law on Associations, with reference to Article 41 of the Constitution.

In early 2025, an initial criminal investigation into the board members of Genç LGBTI+ was initiated on 'suspicion of facilitating the publication of obscene material' and 'establishing an association for prohibited purposes or to commit criminal acts.'

On 3 February 2025, a dissolution lawsuit was filed before the İzmir Civil Court of 1<sup>st</sup> Instance No. 3, alleging that the Association had made obscene social media posts and encouraged society toward "LGBTI+ identity." The first hearing of the dissolution case took place on 11 March 2025. Due to improper service of notifications, the Association was unaware of the proceedings and therefore not represented at the hearing. Once informed, the Association promptly submitted a petition to the Court and was granted additional time to file its statement of defence. The second hearing of the dissolution case was held on 8 April 2025. This marked the first time the Association's lawyers participated in the proceedings, during which they submitted the Association's defence.

Following a request by the governor of Izmir for further information regarding the criminal investigation, a second investigation on identical allegations was also initiated in March 2025. While the first criminal investigation by the Cyber Crimes Bureau of the İzmir Chief Public Prosecutor's Office was closed in August 2025 with a decision not to pursue a prosecution after concluding that the posts did not constitute a criminal offence, the second one was not dropped, leading to the indictment under the Law on Associations.

On 28 October 2025, Izmir Chief Public Prosecutor issued an indictment under Article 32/1p of the Law on Associations (Law No. 5253) against 11 members of the executive and supervisory boards of Genç LGBTI+. The first hearing in the case will be held on 8 April at the Izmir Criminal Court of 1<sup>st</sup> Instance No. 47.

Finally, on 11 December 2025, the İzmir 3rd Civil Court of First 1st Instance No. 3 ordered the dissolution of Genç LGBTI+ Association, reasoning that the social media posts had reached a wide audience, were "encouraging" toward LGBTI+ identities, and were contrary to public morality and Article 41 of the Constitution. The reasoned judgment was issued on the same day. Genç LGBTI+ is appealing the decision.

Laws, such as public morality laws, weaponize and misuse subjective ideas about "morality" as pretexts to impose illegitimate restrictions on freedoms of expression, as well as freedom of peaceful assembly and association, especially in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity. Charges relating to distributing materials or information considered to be "obscene" are effectively used to criminalize and suppress the expression of identities and expressions that do not conform to prevailing norms. States have the duty to protect the exercise of the right to freedom of expression and freedom of association of all, by ensuring that the right is not curtailed by overly broad and vague legislation and arbitrary implementation.

**PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET:** Turkish, English

You can also write in your own language.

**PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL:** 17 September 2026

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

**NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN:** Emirhan Şaşmaz (they/them) Kerem Dikmen (he/him) and nine others