



COALITION FOR SEXUAL  
AND BODILY RIGHTS  
IN MUSLIM SOCIETIES

## Statement of Solidarity for Freedom of Assembly and Association and the Rights of LGBTIQ+ People in Turkey

4 February 2021

The Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR) expresses our solidarity with the people of Turkey who are fighting to ensure that freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and association, and the broader human rights of LGBTIQ+ peoples are respected. We are deeply alarmed by the repression of academic freedoms and escalating violence at Boğaziçi University in recent days. This includes the shutting down of the LGBTIQ+ Club on campus,<sup>1</sup> the arrests of hundreds of students and activists, targeting specifically LGBTIQ+ students and all LGBTIQ+ community, and the increasing militarization of campus through continued police presence..

Commitments to freedom of expression, and freedom of peaceful assembly and association are cornerstones of democratic societies, ensuring exchange of ideas, pluralism, and dialogue across the diversity of peoples of any given nation. Under a false pretext of shoring up “national security”, the AKP government has increasingly acted to silence public debate and critique across universities, beginning with mass evacuations, taking administrative or judicial action against professors voicing critical views, and the continued incarceration of academics, students and intellectuals over the last few years.<sup>2</sup>

This escalating violence in the sphere of higher education over the years, has also had a deeply chilling effect on freedom of expression, freedom of association, and human rights across wider social spheres in Turkey. The most recent events at Boğaziçi University, and the statements from those in power--including the government appointed University Rector, the Minister of Interior Affairs, and the President as well--are deeply disturbing, considering they attempt to justify the restrictions of academic freedoms, and the rights of LGBTIQ+ people specifically, in the name of Islamic values.<sup>3</sup>

In a public statement President Erdogan targeted LGBTIQ+'s for the protests and denied LGBTIQ+ existence in Turkey, saying that LGBTIQ+ existence is not in accordance with Turkish

national and religious values. We as feminists and LGBTIQ+ people living in Muslim societies affirm and restate unequivocally that LGBTIQ+ peoples have always existed within Muslim societies and across the world, and will

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<sup>1</sup> [Melih Bulu shut off the Boğaziçi LGBTI+ Studies Club!](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Middle East Studies Association](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Slender, investigations, and hate campaigns against LGBTI+'s at Boğaziçi University](#)



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continue to exist. The manipulation of religious ideology to deny fundamental human rights, either by state or non-state actors, cannot ever be condoned.

The Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies is deeply concerned for the security and safety of our friends and allies, who are organizing and living within a climate of fear and insecurity, with no protection or recourse from the judicial or legal systems in place.

We call upon the Turkish government to ensure the exercise of independent thought and freedom of expression and association in the country, in line with its human rights obligations and constitution.

We affirm sexual and bodily integrity, freedom of expression and freedom of religion and belief are fundamental rights of all people, regardless of their gender, citizenship, class, age, mental and physical ability, religion, marital status, ethnic identity, sexual orientation, and sex characteristics. We stand in unequivocal support of LGBTIQ+ people in Turkey, and their fundamental rights to live with dignity and free from persecution and violence.

We amplify the call from the people of Turkey, for the international community to raise awareness, issue statements of solidarity, and spread the news of what is happening globally.

[#LGBTİHaklarıİnsanHaklarıdır](#) [#AsagiBakmayacagiz](#) [#WeWillNotLookDown](#)

Signed,

Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR)