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Turkey: Activist group will not be closed for ‘violating Turkish moral values’

Amnesty International welcomed today’s ruling against the closure of *Black Pink Triangle*, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) association based in the western city of İzmir. In his 30 April ruling, the judge said: ‘Because, like every human being, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals also have the freedom of association, I rule against the application to close the association’.

The association faced closure following a complaint by the İzmir Governor’s Office (part of the Ministry of the Interior) that the aims of the association violated ‘Turkish moral values and family structure’.

The case was the latest in a series of attempts by the Ministry of the Interior to close LGBT associations through the courts on similar grounds. Cases were brought against LGBT association *KAOS-GL* in 2005 and *Pembe Hayat (Pink Life)* in 2006. Following a long legal battle, *Lambda Istanbul* won its case against closure in April 2009 when the local court in Istanbul confirmed the decision of the Supreme Court of Appeals to overturn a previous closure ruling.

Amnesty International campaigned to stop the closure of *Black Pink Triangle* since January 2010. An appeal was issued to its members around the world to call on the Minister of Interior Beşir Atalay as well as the Governor of İzmir and the prosecutor in the case to uphold the right to freedom of association without discrimination. During the hearing today, the prosecutor also called for the case to be dismissed.

After the ruling, *Black Pink Triangle* issued the following statement:

“We see this ruling in favour of freedoms as a very important decision for the struggle for LGBT freedoms. At the same time, we hope that the legal barriers erected in front of *Black Pink Triangle* Izmir and other LGBT associations will not be also erected in front of other new LGBT organizations. Otherwise, every new LGBT association will face severe difficulties to exercise their right to freedom of association through the requirement to change their constitution and closure cases. We thank all our friends who have displayed their solidarity through their wish for an equal and free world without discrimination.”

Amnesty International calls on the government in Turkey to introduce a comprehensive non-discrimination law which includes specific protections against unequal treatment based on sexual orientation and gender identity in all areas of life.

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