

#LOVEISONTRIAL: DEMAND JUSTICE FOR TURKISH STUDENTS DEFENDING LGBTI+ RIGHTS

WHAT'S THE ISSUE?

From day one, students Melike and Özgür dedicated themselves to defending lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI+) rights at their university.

As prominent members of the LGBTI+ Solidarity Group at Middle East Technical University (METU) in Ankara, they've organised numerous marches and events. They've engaged with an ever-growing number of students, against a backdrop of increasing homophobia and restrictions on freedom of expression in Turkey.

"We need your support, all around the world to defeat this homophobia and transphobia around us." - Melike

The group of students have organised an annual Pride march on campus since 2011. Over the years, Pride on their campus grew in size and visibility.

However, in 2019, the university's management told the students the Pride march that they had planned could not go ahead on campus. Undeterred, the Solidarity Group staged a Pride sit-in instead.

In response, the university called the police who used excessive force, including tear gas, against the peaceful protesters. Police arrested at least 23 students – including Melike and Özgür – and an academic. Some of those detained hadn't even taken part in the protest.

Despite simply exercising their right to peaceful protest 18 students and the Academic are on trial. If found guilty, they face up to three years in prison.

HOW CAN AMNESTY HELP?

Melike and Özgür, and the other 16 students and 1 academic, were due to stand trial on 10 December 2020, which is also international Human Rights Day. The trial was postponed due to global pressure on the Turkish authorities, including from 30,000 activists in the UK who sent emails to the Minister of Justice.

Their trial has been rescheduled for 30 April 2021, and we need to put the same amount of pressure on the Turkish authorities again.

We know this kind of pressure works – it prevented Melike and Özgür being convicted last year. Now we need to use the power of the Amnesty Student Network to make sure they are finally acquitted.

WHAT CAN STUDENTS DO?

We want students across the UK to post images of solidarity students in Turkey to encourage their friends, family and social media followers to take action.

Students can show their university stands in solidarity by posting an image which symbolises their university and pride on their social media channels.

For example:

- Post a picture of you or your university logo with a pride flag/filter.
- Post an image of a famous/notable university location or building with a pride flag/filter.
- Post a picture of yourself with a pride flag on your campus (if you are on campus).



**Love is on trial.
On 30th April Melike and Ozgur go
on trial. Their crime? Organising
Pride at university.**



**Take action! Send an email to
Turkish authorities now calling
for an acquittal using the link**

In your post, please include this text with a link to the email action:

*On 30 April, Melike and Özgür, go on trial. They face three years in prison. Their crime?
Organising Pride at university. #loveisontrial*

*Take action: send an email to Turkish authorities now calling for their acquittal
<http://www.amnesty.org.uk/loveisontrial>*

We're focusing the campaign on the 10 days before the trial, when it will have most impact.

Please post ask your members to post their messages of solidarity from 20 April.

WANT TO DO MORE?

As well as getting as many of your student group members to post on their social media from 20 – 30 April, you can help amplify the campaign by

- Asking prominent students at your university to take part, such as Students' Union officers or officers-elect.
- Reach out to other student group and ask them to share with their members. Please do pass on this action guide. Think about the societies who may be particularly interested, like your LGBTI society and other campaigning groups.
- Use your group's social media platforms to keep up the pressure over the 10 days of action. The Amnesty UK Students Instagram page will be sharing new content over this period <https://www.instagram.com/amnestyukstudents/>
- Join Amnesty UK's social media action on the 26 April. Keep an eye out on Amnesty's social media channel's and share our posts <https://twitter.com/amnestyuk>