

BEIJING DECLARATION AND PLATFORM FOR ACTION

Assessing the Situation of Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Women in Turkey - 30 Years After Beijing Declaration

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Introduction

As we enter the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, this report aims to assess the current situation of lesbian, bisexual, transgender (LBT) women living in Turkey. The Beijing Declaration, with its 12 strategic goals for achieving gender equality, aimed for women to have equal rights in economic, social, cultural and political spheres. However, the declaration is not inclusive of women of all sexual orientations and gender identities and does not treat the specific discrimination and challenges faced by LBT women. In this context, we should recognize that, alongside the important steps taken in the framework of gender equality, specific efforts to promote the rights and well-being of LBT women are of vital importance.

In Turkey, especially in recent years, the discrimination faced by LGBTI+ persons has become more visible thanks to the devoted work of activists and LGBTI+ associations. The monitoring studies and reports published by these associations have not only documented the difficulties experienced by LGBTI+ persons, but also enabled them to be included in local, national and international solidarity networks by partially gaining visibility on international platforms. This process has made it possible for the LGBTI+ community to be heard and their demands to reach wider

audiences. However, the "agents of influence" law "¹, which came to was introduced in Turkey in 2024, aims to deal a serious blow to the civil society. This law was brought up for debate in the Turkish Grand National Assembly in the immediate aftermath of the 2024 local elections, and was supported by AK Party MPs. By criminalizing the legitimate activities of civil society organizations, such as documenting human rights violations committed by state or non-state actors, the "Agent of Influence Law" aims to impose severe penalties, including shutting down associations and labeling them as "agents of influence". If enacted, the ban on activities such as research, monitoring and reporting on violations would severely restrict human rights defenders and civil society. It is likely that writing such a report as the one you are currently reading is in imminent danger of being criminalized.

The designation of 2025 as the "Year of the Family"² in Turkey indicates an official stance taken against women and specifically the LGBTI+ community in Turkey. AKP officials, who abolished the "Ministry of Women" envisaged by the Beijing declaration and established the "Ministry of Family and Social Services" in its place, targeted LGBTI+s with language such as "desexualization policies", "deviant ideologies" and "harmful movements", emphasizing that family values must be protected against LGBTI+.

These statements show clearly that official policies in Turkey display a negative attitude towards LGBTI+ rights and that efforts to defend the rights of these communities face serious obstacles. The "Year of the Family" program targets the LGBTI+ community within the framework of the state's cultural and moral values, making it difficult for them to exist in the public sphere and preventing the spread of anti-discrimination campaigns.

This oppressive atmosphere leads to increased discrimination in access to basic rights such as education, health and employment, especially on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. The impunity or encouragement of violence and hate crimes encountered in public and private spheres increases distrust in institutions regarding access to justice and negatively affects the lives of LGBTI+ persons. Structural barriers to achieving economic independence, discrimination in the labor market and social exclusion are among the factors that increase the risk of poverty.

In the shadow of these agendas, this report aims to comprehensively assess the discrimination and challenges faced by LBT women living in Turkey in light of the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration. It also aims to contribute to the empowerment of LBT women in the context of gender equality by providing policy recommendations and ways to overcome these challenges.

¹ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/11/turkiye-proposed-agents-of-influence-law-is-attack-on-civil-society-and-must-be-rejected/>

² <https://kaosgl.org/en/single-news/the-family-year-was-introduced-lgbti-s-are-targeted-again-desexualisation-using-lgbt-as-a-battering-ram-34>

Beijing Declaration and Strategic Objectives and Actions

A. Women and poverty

The first objectives of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is to enable women to fight poverty and achieve economic independence. This goal aims to ensure women's equal access to economic opportunities, increase their income levels and prevent poverty.

Assessment for LBT Women in Turkey

Poverty in Turkey has deepened in recent years due to neoliberal policies, changes in the economic structure and the pandemic. The privatization of public resources and the diversion of economic resources in favor of a limited group of people brought about by neoliberalism have increased inequality in income distribution, increased unemployment rates and made it difficult to meet basic needs.

According to the report *From Discrimination to Poverty*³, LGBTI+'s in Turkey LBT women are more economically disadvantaged because of their gender identity and sexual orientation. Economic uncertainties and the decline in employment caused by neoliberal policies lead to underrepresentation of LBT women in the labor market and precarious employment. Employers' prejudices hinder LBT women's career development and force them to work in precarious sectors with low wages. This makes it difficult for LBT women to achieve economic independence and increases their risk of poverty.

Discrimination prevents LBT women from equal access to income sources, both as a cause and consequence of poverty. Factors such as age, gender, sexual orientation, and educational status increase LBT women's unemployment rates and deprive them of economic opportunities. Economic exploitation and global competition brought about by neoliberalism leave LBT women dispossessed and in poverty. Discrimination against these women, who do not have traditional ties due to their sexual orientation, further disadvantages them in economic and social life.

Policy Recommendations

The following strategies are recommended for the effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration's poverty reduction goal for LBT women in Turkey:

1. **Economic Support Programs:** Establish scholarships, loans and financial assistance programs to support LBT women's economic independence.
2. **Increasing Employment Opportunities:** Develop employability programs for LBT women and ensure equal representation in the labor market.

³ <https://www.17mayis.org/images/publish/pdf/ayrimciliktan-yoksulluga-turkiye-de-lgbti-lar-27-09-2022.pdf>

3. **Anti-Discrimination Laws:** Strengthen and enforce laws that prevent discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in the workplace.
4. **Training and Professional Development:** Implementation of training programs for LBT women to improve their professional skills.

B. Education and training of women

The second objective of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action aims to ensure women's access to equal opportunities in education and training, promote gender equality in education and empower women through education. This goal focuses on raising women's education levels, eliminating discrimination in educational institutions and increasing women's vocational training opportunities.

Right to Education in Turkey

Although the right to education in Turkey is guaranteed by the Turkish Constitution and international conventions, this does not reflect reality for LGBTI+ persons. According to the report on the human rights of lesbians prepared by Kaos GL⁴, gender-based discrimination and prejudices in education negatively affect the academic success and continuity of LBT women in education. Bullying, hate speech and exclusion at schools and universities prevent LBT women from completing their education.

Sample Opinion from the report: "I have always experienced discrimination from primary school to university. There is no classroom where I have not felt this. For 15 years, I was subjected to discrimination at every stage of my education life, both by my peers and educators."

Challenges in Education

The exclusion and violence they face in education prevents LBT women from attending school, weakening their labor force participation and economic independence in the long run. Furthermore, the prejudices they face in education limit LBT women's vocational choices, increasing their risk of poverty.

The challenges LBT women face in education are not limited to sexual orientation and gender identity. Factors such as race, ethnicity, immigration status and economic status further deepen the inequalities these women experience in education. An intersectional perspective shows that the multiple discrimination and barriers LBT women face in education create complex dynamics that increase their risk of poverty.

Policy Recommendations

⁴ <https://kaosgldernegi.org/images/library/lezbi-yenleri-n-i-nsan-haklari-raporu-2.pdf>

The following strategies are recommended for the effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration's education goal for LBT women in Turkey:

1. **Inclusive Education Policies:** Develop and implement laws that protect the rights of LBT people and prevent discrimination in educational institutions.
2. **Awareness and Education Programs:** Implementation of training programs in schools and universities to raise awareness on gender equality and LGBTI+ rights.
3. **Support Services:** Providing psychological support and counseling services for LBT women will help them overcome the challenges they face during the education process.
4. **Economic Supports:** Scholarships and financial support programs should be established to help them overcome the economic barriers they face in education.

C. Women and Health

The third objective of the Beijing Declaration and Plan of Action aims to ensure women lead healthy lives and protect their reproductive rights. LBT women in Turkey face various intersectional barriers to their health and reproductive rights. Economic poverty and social prejudices make it difficult for LBT women to access health services, negatively affecting their overall well-being.

Discrimination and Intersectionality in Access to Health Services

LBT women are discriminated against in health institutions on the basis of their sexual orientation and gender identity. Prejudices of health professionals prevent them from receiving the health services they need and negatively affect their psychology. Access to reproductive health services such as hormone therapy and gender affirmation surgery is very difficult for trans women due to both economic and legal barriers.

According to the Guide to Care for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Trans Patients⁵, "approximately 45% of lesbian and bisexual women avoid seeking healthcare due to discrimination. When lesbian and bisexual women access healthcare, providers often focus on their sexual orientation rather than their sexual history. Meanwhile, it is often overlooked that lesbian and bisexual women may also have male partners or may have been subjected to sexual assault."

It is frequently reported that lesbian, bisexual and transgender women are discriminated against, mistreated or misdiagnosed by health professionals. The article series "Gynecology Talks"⁶, which started to be published on Kaos GL.org in 2017, and the studies conducted on this subject revealed the discrimination and violations experienced by lesbian, bisexual, trans women and trans men when they visit gynecologists. Another problem brought to light by these studies is that women

⁵ <https://kaosgldernegi.org/images/library/saglik.pdf>

⁶ <https://kaosgldernegi.org/images/library/2020jinekolog-muhabbetleri-son.pdf>

who are discriminated against in gynecology examinations are discouraged from continuing any treatments and ultimately refrain from receiving health services until their health problems become serious.

Sample Opinion: "I also have to explain myself and to a surgeon with a diploma. That there can be a sexual life outside the penis and I have to convince a gynecologist of this. The fact that I am alive is the biggest activism. The biggest struggle is my existence. 'We can't take a smear from you, because HPV is only transmitted through the penis and nothing else,' the doctor told me. Your sexual life is being denied, so the doctor says you cannot get that disease from there. Maybe I would have gotten cancer because of this negligence if I had believed the doctor and gone there. OK, I will take a sample from you, but I will make you sign a paper, the doctor told me."⁷

Challenges in Refugee LBT Women's Access to Health

According to the report titled "Turkey's Imperiality with LGBTI Refugees⁸" published by Kaos GL, for refugee lesbians, these difficulties in accessing health care are exacerbated by intersectional discrimination. As noted in General Comment No. 14 of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, language barriers and lack of treatment facilities in the city of residence are the main problems for LGBTI refugees seeking access to health services. Inadequate communication with doctors due to language barriers can lead to incorrect treatment and lack of knowledge of hospital and appointment procedures can result in serious health problems not being treated. In addition, the lack of treatment facilities in the city of residence and the lack of specialized doctors pose serious life risks for chronic and infectious diseases and complications during the transition process.

Need for Psychological Support

LBT refugees need a high level of psychological support due to the violence, harassment, rape, torture and threats they face in their countries of origin as well as the psychological damage caused by the exclusion, discrimination and violence they face on a daily basis in Turkey. In the study titled "Guidelines for the Care of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Patients" published by Kaos GL, it is stated that 45% of lesbian and bisexual women refuse to apply to health service providers in the face of discrimination and when these individuals access health services, the focus is on their sexual orientation rather than their sexual history. This situation prevents LBT women from fully benefiting from health services and causes their sexual health to be neglected.

Policy Recommendations

⁷ <https://kaosgldernegi.org/images/library/lezbi-yenleri-n-i-nsan-haklari-raporu-2.pdf>

⁸ <https://kaosgldernegi.org/images/library/2019lgbti-multeciler-ile-imtihani-web.pdf>

The following strategies are recommended for the effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration's health and reproductive rights goal for LBT women in Turkey:

1. **Legal Regulations:** Develop and implement comprehensive legislation to facilitate LBT women's access to health services and prevent discrimination in health institutions.
2. **Education and Awareness:** Training programs for health professionals should be organized to prevent discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
3. **Economic Supports:** Financial support programs and expansion of health insurance coverage are needed to increase access to health services for low-income LBT women.
4. **Inclusive Health Policies:** Implementing policies that promote inclusion in health services will ensure that LBT women have equal access to the health services they need.
5. **Language and Cultural Support:** Interpreter services to overcome language barriers and culturally sensitive health services should be available for refugee LBT women.
6. **Psychological Support:** Post-trauma support and psychological counseling services need to be expanded to support the psychological health of LBT women.

D. Violence against Women

The fourth objective of the Beijing Declaration and Plan of Action is to prevent all forms of violence against women and to protect and support victims. This goal includes eliminating physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence, strengthening legislation and raising public awareness.

Assessment for LBT Women in Turkey

In a cis-heteronormative social construct, public spaces are organized and designed for non-trans heterosexual men and women. In the event that same-sex couples exhibit behaviors of intimacy and attraction in this public construct, they are likely to face 'disgust, disapproval and even attacks' by these norms. "For women or lesbians who are assigned women in this reality, the situation is more layered: **Mainstream Pornography and Male-Gaze:** Relationships are sexualized through the male gaze. **Sexual Harassment:** Lesbian couples often face sexual harassment when kissing or being intimate in public. **Violence:** They face violence when they refuse to conform to male fantasies about their sexuality or gender expression, or to the standard perception of "femininity"."⁹

LBT women in Turkey are subjected to various forms of violence. These forms of violence reduce LBT women's quality of life, hinder their economic independence and

⁹ <https://lesbiangenius.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Observatory-Lesbophobia-2019-2022.pdf>

complicate their social integration. Below, specific practices of violence against LBT women in Turkey and affected groups are detailed.

Types of Discrimination and Violence

1. **Domestic Violence:** In Turkey, LBT women are subjected to physical violence such as beating, slapping, pushing and hitting as part of domestic violence; they also face economic and psychological forms of violence.
2. **Psychological Violence:** They are subjected to forms of psychological violence such as forced medical treatment, manipulation, insults, hate speech and so-called conversion therapy. Refugee LBT women suffer added serious psychological damage due to the violence and exclusion they experience.
3. **Stalking:** Especially trans and masculine lesbians are exposed to stalking on the street and online. Such violence negatively affects their daily lives and causes them to live in constant fear.
4. **Forced Marriage:** Forced heterosexual marriage practices in Turkey cause discrimination for LBT women. The social structure that rejects the definition of marriage based on equality causes LBT women to be subjected to violence and oppression through marriage.
5. **Sexual Harassment:** Sexual harassment against LBT women at work, on the streets and online platforms is common in Turkey. Hate speech and prejudices based on sexual orientation cause these harassments to increase.

E. Women and Armed Conflict

The fifth objective of the Beijing Declaration and Plan of Action is to reduce the impact of armed conflict on women, ensure their protection in times of conflict and promote their effective participation in peace processes. This goal seeks to address the specific challenges women face in conflict settings and strengthen the role of women in peacebuilding.

Assessment for LBT Women in Turkey

Turkey has been the scene of various internal conflicts for many years and has been a transit and accommodation country for refugees due to its geographical location. This situation affects women's groups, including LBT women, in various ways. Armed conflicts and the resulting refugee crises have serious negative impacts on LBT women's safety, access to health services and social integration.

The Impact of Armed Conflict on LBT Women

Armed conflicts leave deep scars on both the physical and psychological health of LBT women. Interviews conducted with 75 LGBTI+ persons in Diyarbakır as part of

the "Being LGBTI+ in Diyarbakır"¹⁰ research reveal the experiences of discrimination and violence experienced by LBT women during Turkey's internal conflicts. While the discrimination experienced during peacetime is generally more individual and based on social norms, during wartime these discriminations have become systematized and structuralized. LBT women face additional challenges due to violence, discrimination and exclusion in conflict zones; language barriers and cultural differences make it difficult for them to access health services and social support.

Sample Opinion: "LGBTI+ persons living in Diyarbakır are targeted by the State's institutionalized hate policies and are subjected to discrimination, violence and judicial harassment, while at the same time having to struggle against poverty and racism. We can effectively fight against homophobia, transphobia, patriarchy, racism and poverty by formulating an intersectional struggle against the notion of disposability produced by neoliberal policies and war in the context of anti-war and by putting forward a strong demand for peace."¹¹

Policy Recommendations

The following strategies are suggested for the effective implementation of this goal of the Beijing Declaration for LBT women in Turkey:

1. **Strengthening Protection Mechanisms:** Develop and implement special protection programs for LBT women in conflict zones.
2. **Improving Access to Health Services:** Establish infrastructure and support programs to facilitate access to health services in areas affected by armed conflict.
3. **Social Integration Programs:** Implementation of training and employment programs to support the social integration of LBT refugee women.
4. **Promoting Women's Participation in Peace Processes:** Develop policies to ensure the active participation of LBT women in peacebuilding processes.
5. **Psychological Support Services:** Expand psychological support and counseling services for LBT women to reduce the traumatic effects of armed conflict.

F. Women and Economy

The sixth objective of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action is to enable women to take a more active role in economic life, promote their equal representation in the labor market and increase their access to economic opportunities. This goal aims to improve women's access to employment opportunities, eliminate gender-based discrimination in the workplace and promote women's economic independence.

¹⁰ <https://demos.org.tr/savasta-ve-barista-lgbtılar-gecis-donemi-adaletine-diyarbakırdan-bakmak/>

¹¹ <https://demos.org.tr/kurt-lgbtılar-yoksulluk-ve-barisin-olanakları/>

Assessment for LBT Women in Turkey

LBT women in Turkey face various difficulties in the economic sphere. Kaos GL Association's 10 years of research and studies such as "The Status of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Plus People Working in the Private Sector in Turkey Report"¹² and "The Status of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Plus People Working in the Public Sector in Turkey Report"¹³ conducted in 2023 provide important data on the economic situation of LBT women.

Situation in the Public Sector

According to the 2023 survey, as a result of an online survey conducted with 96 people working as public employees in Turkey who declared that they are LGBTI+:

Inclusion Strategy and Discrimination: LBT people are forced to hide their identities in the public sector. Only 3.1% of the respondents stated that they are completely open at work. This strategy is seen as a defense mechanism to reduce the risk of discrimination and hate speech in the workplace. **Sample Opinion:** "I don't think I am in a comfortable enough position to be open, I am a teacher." (lesbian cis woman working as a teacher)

Work Productivity and Job Satisfaction: Fear of discrimination leads to a decrease in LBT people's work performance and motivation. This negatively affects the economic productivity of both individuals and organizations. **Sample Opinion:** "I was determining the colors of an overpass project. I made it colorful and even used pastel colors. Although it had nothing to do with it, my manager warned me that it should not be like LGBTI colors, please change it." (Non-binary lesbian working as an engineer/architect)

Lack of Empowerment Mechanisms: Empowerment mechanisms for LBT persons in the public sector in Turkey are extremely limited. For example, only 2.1% of institutions take measures against discrimination related to gender identity and sexual orientation. This constitutes a major obstacle to economic empowerment.

Situation in the Private Sector

Within the scope of the 2023 survey, the results of the survey conducted with 197 people who work in a private company operating in Turkey and who declared that they are LGBTI+ are as follows:

Discrimination and Hate Speech: In the private sector, 32% of LBT workers have been subjected to hate speech. This situation negatively affects the social and economic security of LBT people. **Women's Labor Force Participation:** TÜİK data reveals that the labor force participation rate of women in Turkey is much lower than that of men in general. Trans women and other LBTs constitute an even more

¹² <https://kaosgldernegi.org/images/library/o-zel-sekto-r-2023.pdf>

¹³ <https://kaosgldernegi.org/images/library/kamu-c-alis-anlari-2023.pdf>

vulnerable group in this context. **Economic Empowerment:** In private sector enterprises that implement empowering mechanisms, LBTs' job satisfaction and motivation increase. However, such practices are rarely encountered.

Economic Challenges and Wage Inequality

In addition to discrimination based on sexual orientation, LBT women often suffer from wage gaps between men and women.¹⁴

Policy Recommendations

Within the framework of the Beijing Declaration's economic equality and empowerment goals, the following strategies are recommended for LBT women in Turkey:

1. **Strengthening anti-discrimination laws:** Stricter enforcement of laws preventing discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in the workplace and penalizing violations.
2. **Equal Pay Policies:** Implementation of policies to eliminate wage inequalities between men and women in the workplace.
3. **Creating Empowering Mechanisms:** Providing mentoring programs, career development opportunities and leadership training to support LBT women's economic empowerment.
4. **Increasing Employment Opportunities:** Develop employability programs for LBT women and ensure equal representation in the labor market.
5. **Economic Support Programs:** Establish scholarships, loans and financial assistance programs to support LBT women's economic independence.
6. **Creating Inclusive Workplaces:** Promote an inclusive culture in workplaces and implement policies that support diversity and inclusion.

G. Women in power and decision-making

The seventh objective of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action is to enable women to play a more active role in political, economic and social decision-making processes, increase their access to leadership positions and eliminate inequalities in the balance of power. This goal aims to contribute to achieving gender equality by promoting women's representation at all levels.

Assessment for LBT Women in Turkey

¹⁴ Report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, A/74/181 <https://kaosgldernegi.org/images/library/2019birlesmis-milletler-cinsel-yonelim-ve-cinsiyet-kimligine-dayali-siddet-ve-ayrimciliga-karsi-koruma.pdf>

Although LBT women in Turkey are involved in political and social decision-making processes, they are underrepresented and face various obstacles in this field.

Specific Problems and Needs

Discrimination and Hate Crimes: LBT women may be subjected to discrimination and hate crimes due to their sexual orientation and gender identity while trying to take an active role in the political arena (local government or central government levels). This makes it difficult for them to participate in decision-making processes. They may be exposed to discriminatory language during local and central election campaigns in Turkey.

Lack of Representation: LBT women are underrepresented in political and social leadership positions. Political parties include LBT women candidates symbolically and not in a real capacity where they have chances of being elected. This creates an electoral process where the candidates are attacked and harmed, forced to take risks with no possibility of reward.

Lack of Training and Mentoring Opportunities: LBT women have limited access to the necessary training and mentoring to develop their leadership skills and take an active role in the political arena. This prevents them from realizing their full potential.

Security Concerns: LBT women experience security concerns due to the violence and threats they face when ascending to political positions. This discourages their active participation.

Policy Recommendations

The following strategies are suggested for the effective implementation of this goal of the Beijing Declaration for LBT women in Turkey:

1. **Representation Enhancement Programs:** Establish mentoring and training programs to support LBT women's access to political and community leadership positions.
2. **Legal Protection against Discrimination:** More stringent legislation and enforcement of laws against discrimination and hate crimes against LBT women in the political arena.
3. **Security Measures:** Increased security measures for LBT women to deal with the violence and threats they face when ascending to political positions.
4. **Awareness and Education Programs:** Implementation of training programs to raise awareness on sexual orientation and gender identity in political parties and public institutions.
5. **Representation Quotas:** Implement quotas to increase the representation of LBT women in political and community leadership positions.

H. Institutional Mechanisms for the Advancement of Women

The eighth objective of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action aims to establish strong institutional mechanisms and strengthen existing structures to support the advancement of women. This includes the development of laws that protect women's rights, the implementation of women-focused policies and the establishment of infrastructure to ensure women's equal participation in society.

Assessment for LBT Women in Turkey

LBT women face serious challenges in their progress due to the lack of institutional mechanisms and discrimination-based barriers of existing structures. In particular, Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention in 2021 has significantly contributed to the weakening of institutional mechanisms in the field of women's rights and gender equality. This further weakens mechanisms to protect and promote the rights of LBT women.

Policy Recommendations

The following strategies are suggested for the effective implementation of this goal of the Beijing Declaration for LBT women in Turkey:

1. **Strengthening Institutional Legal Arrangements:** Develop laws that protect and promote the rights of LBT women and effectively enforce existing laws.
2. **Implementation of Women-Focused Policies:** Development and implementation of policies specific to the needs of LBT women.
3. **Strengthening Infrastructure:** Creating infrastructure and support mechanisms to ensure women's equal participation in social life.
4. **Training and Awareness Programs:** Implementing training programs to raise awareness on gender equality and LBT rights within institutional structures.
5. **Improving Support Services:** Expand psychological, legal and social support services to protect and promote the rights of LBT women.
6. **Inclusive Policy Development:** Adopting and implementing approaches to increase inclusiveness in policies.

I. Human rights of women

The ninth objective of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action is to ensure women's equal and effective enjoyment of all human rights. This goal aims to improve women's access to fundamental rights, strengthen legal protection mechanisms and promote women's human rights-based lives.

According to the report on the human rights of lesbians prepared by Kaos GL¹⁵, LBT women in Turkey face serious obstacles in accessing the rights envisaged by the Beijing Declaration. Discrimination, violence and exclusion based on sexual orientation and gender identity are widespread. The legal framework is not organised in a way to protect LBT women, and the withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention has left these groups even more vulnerable. LBT women face systematic discrimination in workplaces, health services and access to housing, while hate crimes often go unpunished. In order for the principle of universality of women's rights to be fully implemented, strong legal regulations against discrimination should be enacted, policies to prevent violence should be implemented and support mechanisms for LBT women should be strengthened by raising social awareness.

J. Women and the media

The tenth objective of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action aims to enable women to contribute to achieving gender equality through the media, improve media representation and increase women's influence in the media. This goal includes gender-sensitizing media policies, increasing women's presence in the media sector and taking steps to ensure that the media positively influences gender norms.

Assessment for LBT Women in Turkey

The media in Turkey not only falls short of this goal in terms of representation of LBT women, but also turns into a tool that reinforces discrimination. LBT women are generally ignored in the media or talked about only through murders, targeting and being subjected to hate speech. As seen in the example of Hande Kader, LBT women can only become visible in the media through tragic events or human rights violations resulting in death. However, even this visibility turns into a practice of exclusion reinforced by the discriminatory language and approaches of the media, rather than a rights-based representation.

Kaos GL's 2021 Media Monitoring Report¹⁶ clearly reveals how the media in Turkey renders LBT women invisible and mediates rights violations. Discriminatory language is present in 54% and hate speech in 31% of the news items about LGBTI+ persons in the media. LBT women are targeted and dehumanized with language such as 'immorality' and 'perversion' through their identities. In this process, the media has become not only a medium of misrepresentation but also a tool of state-sponsored hate campaigns. LBT women's freedom of expression, right to organize and social visibility are systematically restricted through the media. In order to realize the egalitarian representation targeted under the heading of women and media, media policies in Turkey need a radical transformation. This requires a rights-based approach to the treatment of LBT women, training of media employees on gender equality and the implementation of more effective control mechanisms against discriminatory broadcasting policies.

¹⁵ <https://kaosgldernegi.org/images/library/lezbi-yenleri-n-i-nsan-haklari-raporu-2.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://kaosgldernegi.org/images/library/medya-i-zleme-2021-web.pdf>

K. Women and the environment

Strategic Objective women and the environment of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action aims to develop comprehensive policies and action plans to ensure women's effective participation in environmental decision-making. It aims to promote women's participation in managerial, regulatory and planning roles in environmental projects, increase their access to information and training, and enable women from indigenous communities to contribute to sustainable environmental management while preserving their traditional knowledge.

In Turkey, LBT women's participation in environmental issues remains limited due to gender inequality, discrimination and invisibility. They are not involved in environmental decision-making mechanisms and are disproportionately affected by processes such as climate crisis, environmental destruction and urban transformation. Especially due to economic inequalities and discrimination, LBT women may be deprived of the right to live in a healthy environment. For example, LBT women living in poverty in cities are negatively affected by urban gentrification projects and their right to housing is violated. In addition, LBT women living in rural areas have to struggle with both social pressure and environmental threats.

L. The girl-child

The twelfth objective of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action is to protect and promote the rights of girls. This goal aims to develop strategies to ensure girls' equal access to education, health, safety and economic opportunities, to reduce the effects of gender norms that hinder girls' development, and to enable girls to realize their full potential.

In Turkey, LBT women are often subjected to discrimination and stigmatisation in the school environment and within the family. The education system lacks a sensitive approach to sexual orientation and gender identity; therefore, LBT girls face problems such as peer bullying, discriminatory attitudes of teachers and exclusion. This can lead to high dropout rates and deprivation of their right to education.