

March 15, 2023

Highlighting the Specific Needs of LGBTQI+ People Following the Earthquake in Northern Syria and Türkiye

The Equality Fund has received important information from our grantee partner, Pink Life, in Türkiye on the situation of LGBTQI+ people following the recent earthquake.

The full texts are reproduced below. We would like to highlight the following points:

- In the aftermath of the earthquake, LGBTQI+ people experienced physical and psychological violence based on their sexual orientation and gender identity (including accusations that they were responsible for the earthquake).
- LGBTQI+ people face discrimination when accessing support and services. They were often denied transportation and shelter. Many LGBTQI+ people could not rely on families for support and had trouble accessing general relief services.
- LGBTQI+ organizations moved to provide support and services.
- The immediate basic needs of LGBTQI+ people in the affected region are: shelter, food, access to health services, blankets, heaters, HIV suppressive drugs, access to hormones, access to winter and plus size clothing (boots, coats, etc.), transportation and psychological support. Additional longer term supports include accommodation, employment and legal advice.

See also our companion background note: *Equality Fund Response to the Recent Earthquakes in Türkiye and Syria*

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Background on Pink Life LGBTI+ Solidarity Association: Pink Life is the first trans rights organization of Türkiye established by trans sex workers in June 2006 in Ankara. Since its establishment, Pink Life has been implementing projects to tackle severe and systematic prejudices, discrimination, hate speech, hate crimes, police violence, ill treatment and torture, social exclusion against LGBTI+ and sex workers. The organization's mission is to build solidarity among LGBTI+ community in Türkiye; to enhance the capacities of trans activists, sex workers and rights based organizations on trans and sex work related issues; to struggle against social and

institutional homophobia and transphobia; to advocate for trans human rights and sex workers rights on the national and international level; to mainstream the visibility and representation of trans individuals through the use of media, culture and arts.. Pink Life is currently leading emergency responses for the LGBTQI+ community in disaster areas and trying to provide basic support to members of the community who can't or are not accessing government services and support due to fear of discrimination and violence.

Initial Report - February 14 2023

In the earthquake that occurred in Kahramanmaraş on February 6, 2023, the LGBTI+ people in the affected areas faced many problems from the first moment of the earthquake until today.

On the first day of the earthquake, due to the blocking of the network, internet, and digital communication channels, many LGBTI+ people were left in the rubble of the earthquake and lost their lives because the search and rescue efforts were insufficient and delayed. On the first day, communication could not be established with those who survived, or any services could not be provided except information about their urgent needs and psychological first aid support. The LGBTI+ organizations in the affected and non-affected areas started to communicate in solidarity and opened the ways of communication on what could be done.

Based on the information received from the LGBTI+ people who could reach us on the first and second day of the earthquake; since the aid provided by AFAD (Disaster and Emergency Management Presidency affiliated with the Ministry of Interior of Türkiye) for basic needs such as drinking water, food, sheltering (safe places), heating, health needs, etc. are insufficient, those who were discriminated could not apply for those aids because of the possibility of violence. While aftershocks were continuing, LGBTI+ people were exposed to physical and psychological violence based on their sexual orientation and gender identity and also to discourses that they were the reason for the earthquake. They could not shelter in the crowded tents and had to meet their urgent needs from their damaged houses or could not benefit from the aid in the field anyway. They sought to leave the city, but since transportation was blocked in both directions, and there were also those who were not taken into vehicles due to their gender identity and sexual orientation, they stayed alone or with their close friends in the earthquake zone.

Considering the possible violence against LGBTI+ people in the affected area and the traumatic experience of the earthquake, they entered into an anxious and alert wait due to the emotions that they experienced intensely, such as stress, anxiety, fear, desperation, and sadness. On the 3rd day of the earthquake, the first physical contact and aid were tried to be delivered through our LGBTI+ friends and allies in the field, solidarity groups, and institutions. The LGBTI+ and ally organizations and people tried to provide food, shelter, and heating to LGBTI+, at least in a way that they could meet their urgent needs. It was tried to provide support through the LGBTI+ solidarity groups for their transportation from the affected areas to many cities, especially Mersin and Ankara. In this

process, LGBTI+ refugees were also directed to receive translation support from institutions that could provide it.

The basic needs of LGBTI+ people in the affected region are as follows; sheltering (winter tent), food, access to health services, blankets, heaters, HIV suppressive drugs, access to hormones, access to winter and plus size clothing (boots, coats, etc.), transportation and psychological support.

LGBTI+ people who could come to Ankara stated that they were not taken to vehicles coming from the affected area; they could not benefit from aid for basic needs; were discriminated against by the people, including the people they knew before, and they had to leave the region without anything wearing very thin clothing and slippers. Although many LGBTI+ people living in Ankara have opened their houses to LGBTI+ people who survived the earthquake, their urgent needs for long-term shelter, food, economic needs, and clothing continue. May 17th Association, Pink Life, Red Umbrella, and Kaos GL are providing psychosocial consultancy and the best they can by collaborating with LGBTI+ people and organizations in the field and other cities.

Temporary accommodation arrangements are also continuing in Mersin. Hotel occupancy rates are very high in surrounding cities. Long-term and safe accommodation, food, and cash needs are essential for LGBTI+ people who survived the earthquake. LGBTI+ people (especially trans people) who cannot receive support from their family and/or have refugee status have difficulties accessing the resources.

While the effects of the earthquake continue, you can follow the social media accounts of Ankara LGBTI+ Earthquake Solidarity and LGBTIQA+ Earthquake Solidarity to show solidarity with the survivors and learn how you can get support.

- **Ankara LGBTI+ Earthquake Solidarity (Ankara LGBTI+ Deprem Dayanışması)**

- Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ankaralgbti1>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/ankaralgbti/>

- **LGBTIQA+ Earthquake Solidarity (Lubunya Deprem Dayanışması)**

- Twitter: <https://twitter.com/lubunyadeprem>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/lubunyadeprem/>

Update - March 1 2023

Starting from the 2nd week of the earthquake, LGBTIQA+ Earthquake Solidarity, Ankara LGBTI+ Earthquake Solidarity, LGBTI+ organizations in the affected area, LGBTI+s from universities, women+ associations, human rights associations and initiatives, and volunteer activists have

continued to communicate with LGBTI+s affected from the earthquake for their urgent needs. The shipments of the needs were provided through the organizations and activists that can access the region physically. As Pink Life LGBTI+ Solidarity Association, through the Dilek Ince Clothing Bank, we continue to provide clothes, shoes, etc., for LGBTI+s in the region and coming to Ankara.

The Legal Consultancy Department of Pink Life received 46 applications. 23 of these applications were about sheltering and security concerns, and the applicants demanded legal support for these problems. Through the Dilek Ince Clothing Bank, Pink Life provided clothes, shoes, etc., to 20 LGBTI+s affected by the earthquake, and 3 of these applications received peer consultancy from Pink Life while they were changing their cities. In addition to that, we corresponded with 2 trans inmates

Donations for Dilek Ince Clothing Bank continue to be collected through the current needs lists (available [here](#)) At the same time, psychological and legal consultancy are continuing for the requests received through the psychological and legal consultancy lines, and face-to-face psychological counseling is provided to the survivors who came to Ankara. Based on the February applications received by Pink Life LGBTI+ Solidarity Association, LGBTI+s in the earthquake zone or who came to Ankara received consultancy 7 times in written form, 25 times over the psychological counseling line, and 6 sessions of face-to-face & online psychological counseling and psychological first aid.

With Bodrum Women Solidarity Association and Association for Struggle Against Sexual Violence, we prepared “The Guide for Lawyers in the Disaster Area on Legal Consultancy Towards the Survivors of Sexual Violence” (available [here](#))

While the LGBTI+s who came to Ankara continue to heal their wounds with the support of LGBTI+ organizations and initiatives, they are also in solidarity with the other LGBTI+s affected by the earthquake through the existing solidarity networks.

On the one hand, LGBTI+s in the region are trying to mourn their losses; on the other hand, they continue to hold on to life by experiencing disaster after disaster as they face discrimination in the tents of AFAD and experience difficulties in reaching humanitarian aid in the region. The trans people who left the region are trying to temporarily stay at the houses provided by LGBTI+ activists in the surrounding provinces, especially Mersin and Ankara.

While the earthquakes continue, the services in the region are still inadequate!

After the 6.4 magnitude earthquake in Hatay on February 20, 2023, based on the communication established with the LGBTI+s in the region:

Due to the inadequate number of tents provided to the area in more than 20 days and the existing tents and gathering areas are not LGBTI+-inclusive, the majority of LGBTI+s are staying at the slightly damaged buildings in the region or the houses of LGBTI+s in surrounding cities. While

power cuts continue in the region from time to time, water service has not been accessible in Iskenderun for 20 days. For this reason, most LGBTI+ have difficulties maintaining their personal hygiene. Uncertainty regarding long-term and permanent sheltering still continues.

While the effects of the earthquake continue, you can follow the social media accounts of Ankara LGBTI+ Earthquake Solidarity and LGBTIQA+ Earthquake Solidarity to show solidarity with the survivors and learn how you can get support.

- **Ankara LGBTI+ Earthquake Solidarity (Ankara LGBTI+ Deprem Dayanışması)**

- Twitter: <https://twitter.com/ankaralgbt1>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/ankaralgbti/>

- **LGBTIQA+ Earthquake Solidarity (Lubunya Deprem Dayanışması)**

- Twitter: <https://twitter.com/lubunyadeprem>
- Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/lubunyadeprem/>