



Statement by the members of the LGBTQIA+ Commission of the EuroMed Rights Regional Working Group on Women's Rights, Gender Justice and Individual Freedoms on the occasion of the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT) 2026.

WHY LGBTQIA+ RIGHTS MUST BE DEFENDED ACROSS THE EURO-MEDITERRANEAN REGION

This year's global IDAHOBIT theme, "At the heart of democracy", underscores that democracy cannot exist where discrimination, criminalization, and exclusion persist, denying people their fundamental rights and freedoms.

Today, May 17, as the world marks the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT), LGBTQIA+ persons across the Euro-Mediterranean region continue to endure violence, criminalization, discrimination, exclusion, and silencing. While realities differ across countries and contexts, one trend is increasingly evident on both shores of the Mediterranean: anti-rights movements are growing stronger, more coordinated, and more politically legitimized.

Across the region, LGBTQIA+ people continue to be targeted by discriminatory laws, hate speech, online harassment, arbitrary arrests, restrictions on freedom of expression and association, and widespread social stigma. These realities are even more acute for LGBTQIA+ migrants, refugees, racialized communities, and persons living in contexts of conflict, occupation, or displacement.

Anti-rights and anti-gender actors are intensifying attacks against LGBTQIA+ communities, activists, and organizations, while shrinking civic space and fueling hostility against human rights defenders and independent civil society. In several countries of the region, LGBTQIA+ rights are portrayed as foreign or incompatible with local cultures – narrative used to justify repression and exclusion. Elsewhere, rights-regressive and conservative movements are increasingly weaponizing anti-gender rhetoric, nationalism, and so-called "traditional values" to roll back hard-won rights and legitimize discrimination.

LGBTQIA+ rights are human rights. Equality, dignity, freedom, and protection from discrimination are universal rights that belong to all people regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or sex characteristics. LGBTQIA+ people have always existed and continue to organize, resist, create, care, and advocate often under extremely difficult and dangerous conditions.



Beyond symbolic gestures disconnected from realities on the ground, the current context calls for stronger alliances and collective action between LGBTQIA+ movements, feminist movements, and broader human rights struggles across the Euro-Mediterranean region.

We, members of the LGBTQIA+ Commission of the EuroMed Rights Regional Working Group on Women's Rights, Gender Justice and Individual Freedoms, call on the European Union, its Member States, and national governments across the Euro-Mediterranean region to move beyond symbolic commitments and adopt concrete measures to protect and advance human rights for LGBTQIA+.

Turning these commitments into reality requires concrete measures, including:

- The explicit integration of LGBTQIA+ rights throughout the future Gender Action Plan IV (GAP IV), including clear commitments, dedicated indicators, and accountability mechanisms;
- Development, review and resource for the EU LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2026–2030, in full consultation with stakeholders across the globe.
- Mandatory reporting by EU Delegations on LGBTQIA+ programming, protection efforts, and engagement with local civil society organizations;
- Dedicated and accessible funding for LGBTQIA+ organizations, movements, and human rights defenders across the Euro-Mediterranean region;
- The inclusion of human rights concerns, of which LGBTQIA+ community's lack of access and enjoyment of them within operationalization efforts of the Pact for the Mediterranean, namely in its Action Plans and related actions;
- Stronger protection mechanisms for activists and organizations facing repression, criminalization, surveillance, and digital attacks;
- The meaningful inclusion of LGBTQIA+ perspectives across EU external action, including within the future EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2028-2034; Continued and strengthened opposition to anti-rights movements seeking to undermine universal human rights protections.

LGBTQIA+ rights must never be treated as secondary or optional issues within broader human rights and equality frameworks.

In the context of shrinking civic space and growing authoritarianism, defending LGBTQIA+ rights cannot be separated from defending democracy itself. Democracies cannot meaningfully function while entire communities are criminalized, excluded from public life, targeted by hate campaigns,



or denied equal protection under the law. LGBTQIA+ struggles across the Euro-Mediterranean region are deeply interconnected, and solidarity across borders remains essential.

IDAHOBIT must not become a mere annual exercise in symbolic visibility while violence, criminalization, and discrimination continue unabated. Visibility without protection remains fragile. Rights without implementation remain empty promises.

Today, we reaffirm our collective commitment to advancing dignity, equality, freedom, and justice for LGBTQIA+ people across the Euro-Mediterranean region. Beyond symbolic solidarity, we call for political courage, concrete action, and sustained accountability.