

Turkey's Erdogan launches 'Year of the Family' with an attack on the LGBTQ+ community



ISTANBUL (AP) — President Recep Tayyip Erdogan marked the launch of Turkey's "Year of the Family" on Monday with an attack on the LGBTQ+ community and the announcement of measures to boost birth rates.

Citing the "historical truth that a strong family paves the way for a strong state," Erdogan unveiled a series of financial measures to support young families.

The president [returned to themes he has espoused before about LGBTQ+ people](#), including the portrayal of the LGBTQ+ movement as part of a foreign conspiracy aimed at undermining Turkey.

“It is our common responsibility to protect our children and youth from harmful trends and perverse ideologies. Neoliberal cultural trends are crossing borders and penetrating all corners of the world,” he told an audience in Ankara. “They also lead to LGBT and other movements gaining ground.

“The target of gender neutralization policies, in which LGBT is used as a battering ram, is the family. Criticism of LGBT is immediately silenced, just like the legitimate criticisms of Zionism. Anyone who defends nature and the family is subject to heavy oppression.”

Despite its low profile in Turkey, the LGBTQ+ community has emerged as one of the main targets of the government and its supporters in recent years.

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[Pride parades have been banned](#) since 2015, with those seeking to participate facing tear gas and police barricades. In recent years, meanwhile, [anti-LGBTQ+ rallies have received state support](#).

Turning to the “alarming” decline in the population growth rate, Erdogan said Turkey was “losing blood” and recalled his 2007 demand that families have at least three children.

The president also pointed to people getting married later in life and rising divorce rates as causes for concern. Turkey’s annual population growth rate dropped from 2.53% in 2015 to 0.23% last year.

“If we do not take the necessary measures, the problem will reach irreparable levels. In such an environment, population loss is inevitable,” he added.

To combat the threat to the family, Erdogan revealed policies such as interest-free loans for newlyweds; improved monetary allowances for the

parents of new-born children; financial, counselling and housing support to encourage new families; and free or low-cost childcare.

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