

ICGC COLLOQUIUM SERIES



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Interdisciplinary Center
for the Study of **Global Change**

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

When Queer Activists Face the Judge: Legalities of the State and Queer Justice in the Turkish Courtrooms

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537 Heller Hall (ICGC)

Live Stream Available @ www.icgc.umn.edu

What happens when LGBTI+ identities are neither included nor excluded in law, as is the case with the Turkish state? Turkey as a predominantly Muslim society complicates this question, as there are no legal prohibitions on homosexual activity. The state refrains from governance through legal criminalization, keeping its licit formation as vague as possible. However, during my ethnographic fieldwork, I was confounded by the abundance of trials wherein more than two hundred queer activists were summoned to the court for violating the law of meeting and demonstrations. Considering the extralegal power of the authoritarian state and its ability to detain other political prisoners for years, despite rulings by international courts, I surprisingly observed that the state's prosecutors consistently lost legal cases against queer defendants. Rather than answering how lawyers accomplish this success in the courtrooms, my presentation argues that limiting the public visibility of queer dissent and its rightful activism emerge as an important political problem for the Turkish state. These trials emerge not only intimidating legal rituals but also as places where the state force activists to officially come out. On the contrary of taking Islam as the source of queer oppression in the Middle East, my broader research examines longstanding secular, legal infrastructures and how an authoritarian state is hindered by its own legality.