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The Art of Acceptance: Turkish Edition

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By **Yaffa Fredrick**

Though homosexuality is legal in Turkey, [84 percent](#) of Turkish citizens admit

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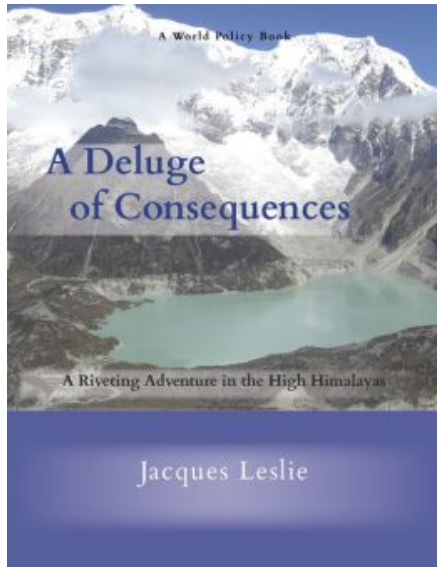
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WORLD POLICY BOOKS

[A Deluge of Consequences](#)



In *A Deluge of Consequences*, the first

they'd prefer not to live next door to a gay or lesbian couple. This 2011 World Values Survey result alludes to the complexity of Turkey's relationship with its lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community. Can Candan, director of "My Child," explores Turkey's struggle with acceptance—focusing the lens on an unexpected group of activists, the parents of LGBT children.

The film begins with ten parents sitting in front of cameras in their respective living rooms. The parents each share their stories of discovery—the moments they realized their children were gay or transsexual, and the subsequent internal battles they had to wage on the path to acceptance.

One mother, of a traditional conservative upbringing, maxed out her credit cards on child psychiatric visits. In a final attempt to cure her son of his affinity for female attire, she took him to a hospital for a medical evaluation. The doctor, bluntly and honestly, told the mother she would have to accept the facts: her son was transsexual, and no amount of biological tinkering could change that reality.

The mother then conceded, "If I had to choose between society and my child, I was going to choose my child." Instead of spending money on additional therapy, she took her transsexual son to purchase his first bra and taught him the art of hooking the strap.

After establishing a critical lesson in the film—that acceptance begins at home—the camera shifts focus to the collective group of parents in action. No longer are they seated. They have made their children's cause their own, and have begun the long and arduous process of lobbying for equal rights. As members of [LISTAG](#) (Families of LGBTs in Istanbul), they meet weekly to discuss issues of discrimination and violence, and prepare for parliamentary battles in the nation's capital.

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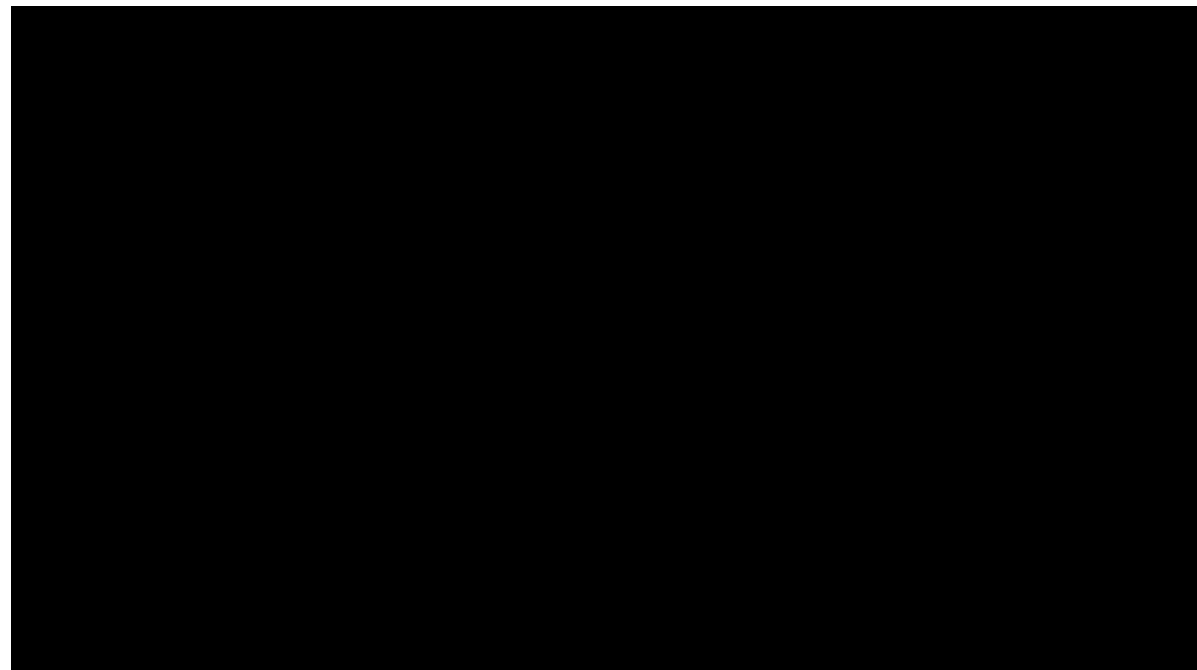
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consequences, the first World Policy e-book, intrepid journalist **Jacques Leslie** takes us along on a mythic, spell-binding trip to the bucolic kingdom of Bhutan, where the planet's next environmental disaster is set to unfold.

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[Benim Çocuğum Fragman 1](#) from [Can Candan](#) on [Vimeo](#).

While homosexuality is not a federal crime in Turkey, there are no safeguards for the LGBT community in the constitution. “Sexual preference” and “gender identification” are not protected classes under discrimination law. The LISTAG parents, however, are determined to amend this law.

As the LISTAG parents prepare rallying signs, rehearse speeches, and exchange personal stories, the film expands the plight of LGBT rights from the personal to the public sphere. Images of the parents speaking in front of parliament, marching in the gay pride parade, and gathering in local cafes populate the screen—expanding the issue from the parents’ living rooms to the streets of Istanbul.

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The World Policy Institute understands that policymakers and opinion leaders need creative ways to catalyze innovation and engage wider coalitions in solving some of the world's biggest challenges. By working with artists focused on the same issues, this cross-cutting initiative seeks to build a new, collaborative model for social change.



In Turkey, fighting for LGBT rights can be a [dangerous undertaking](#), but the LISTAG parents, their children, and fellow activists continue despite threats of abuse and arrest.

The final shot of the film is a long shot of the Istanbul Pride Parade along Istiklal Street. The parents—the focal point of the film until now—give way to an image of 30,000 marchers, all committed to the same cause: equality for the Turkish LGBT community. It's an image that leaves the audience hopeful, inspired, and perhaps most importantly committed to the idea that, despite the many cases of [homophobia](#) and [transphobia](#), a rainbow is indeed on the horizon.

“My Child” premiered at the 13th New York Turkish Film Festival. The festival runs from May 16 to May 25. For a full list of screenings, visit the [website](#).

Yaffa Fredrick is Managing Editor of World Policy Journal.

[Photos courtesy of [My Child](#)]



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