

UN experts alarmed by law targeting LGBT, women's rights advocates and independent voices in Belarus

GENEVA – Legislation penalising information perceived as “promoting” consensual same-sex relations, healthcare for transgender persons or reproductive autonomy that was recently adopted in Belarus will institutionalise discrimination and significantly heighten risks of repression, UN experts* warned today.

“This law represents a dangerous escalation,” the experts said. “It equates legitimate human rights advocacy with an administrative offence and risks further legitimising persecution against already marginalised groups and defenders of their rights.”

[Approved](#) on 2 April 2026 by the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly of Belarus, the law introduces Article 19.16 (“Propaganda of homosexuality, sex change, childlessness, and paedophilia”) into the Code of Administrative Offences. It prohibits the “distribution, in any form” of information aimed at shaping positive perceptions of same-sex relations, gender transition, voluntary childlessness, or recognising paedophilia as permissible. Violations are punishable by fines. In cases involving minors, penalties may include community labour or administrative detention of up to 15 days.

The experts stressed that the legislation misleadingly links legitimate expression with criminal conduct such as paedophilia, reinforcing stigma and hostility. They warned that the law’s vague and overly-broad wording could enable arbitrary enforcement and restrict civic space.

“By conflating human rights advocacy and information about sexual orientation, gender identity and reproductive autonomy with administrative offences, the authorities are fuelling prejudice and legitimising discrimination,” the experts said.

Recalling that under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, freedom of expression may only be restricted where lawful, necessary and proportionate, and such restrictions have repeatedly been found incompatible with international human rights law.

They said the law was being introduced amid reports of harassment, raids and intimidation against lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and other gender-diverse (LGBT+) persons.

“These measures may also disproportionately affect women, and their sexual and reproductive health rights, indispensable to their autonomy and dignity and a prerequisite for the enjoyment of all other human rights. Belarus has an obligation to respect, protect and fulfil women’s and girls’ rights to make free and informed choices about sexuality and reproduction, without violence, coercion or stigma,” the experts said. “The law could have a chilling effect on women advocating for sexual and reproductive health rights, educators,

health professionals and civil society.” “Individuals may face sanctions simply for expressing their identity or providing information essential to health, dignity and equality.”

The law has also raised fears for transgender persons regarding access to medicines. Civil society organisations report increased requests for psychological assistance and support to leave the country, alongside at least 12 documented cases of gender-based persecution in early 2026.

The experts were concerned that the law also introduces liability for the “unlawful representation” of Belarus at international events, potentially targeting political activists and human rights defenders, including those engaging with the UN and other international and regional human rights mechanisms.

Such measures could amount to reprisals and violate freedoms of expression, association and participation, they warned.

“Belarus must halt enactment of the law, repeal discriminatory provisions and ensure its legislation’s and law-enforcement practice’s full compliance with international human rights standards,” the experts said.

The experts have previously raised these concerns with the Government of Belarus in a [communication](#) dated 3 December 2025.

***The experts:**

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- **Graeme Reid**, [Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity](#);
- **Irene Khan**, [Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression](#);
- **Ana Brian Nougères**, [Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy](#);
- **Gina Romero**, [Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association](#);
- **Mary Lawlor**, [Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders](#);
- **Claudia Flores (Chair)**, **Ivana Krstić (Vice-Chair)**, **Dorothy Estrada-Tanck**, **Haina Lu**, **Laura Nyirinkindi**, [the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls](#).

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UN Human Rights, country page – [Belarus](#)

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