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Landmark Court Ruling in Ukraine a Step Toward Equality

A [ruling](#) this week by Ukraine’s Supreme Court recognizing a same-sex couple as a de facto family marks a [significant](#) victory for equality.

The case involves Zorian Kis, a Ukrainian diplomat, and his partner Tymur Levchuk. After years of legal struggle, the Supreme Court upheld a [lower court decision](#) recognizing that the couple constitutes a family under Ukrainian law.

While the ruling sets an important precedent for lower courts, [legislation](#) that would allow same-sex partners to register a civil union has [remained](#) stalled in parliament for three years.

Without formal legal recognition, same-sex couples in Ukraine are not considered immediate family members, blocking [access](#) to spousal hospital visits, medical decisions, inheritance, and other rights.

Public opinion in Ukraine on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) rights has shifted in recent years, particularly since [Russia’s 2022 full-scale invasion](#). The service of LGBT soldiers in Ukraine’s armed forces has reshaped public debate. A 2024 survey [found](#) that over 70 percent of Ukrainians support equal rights, a figure that remains high today.

In June 2023, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that Ukraine violated prohibitions against discrimination and the right to respect for private and family life by failing to provide legal recognition for same-sex couples. The court rejected the government’s claim that protecting “traditional families” justifies excluding same-sex couples and highlighted

that Ukraine offers two forms of legal recognition for different-sex couples.

A new draft civil code **defines** “de facto family unions” as different-sex partnerships, **explicitly excluding** same-sex families. If adopted, Ukraine could run afoul of obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights and complicate its path toward European Union membership, which **requires** compliance with nondiscrimination standards.

The Supreme Court has made a clear determination: same-sex couples are families and the law must respect their rights. It is beyond time for the law on the books to catch up.

For LGBT Ukrainians, including many serving on the front lines and their loved ones, the continued legislative delay leaves them in a legal vacuum.

Ukraine is fighting for a future based on human rights and rule of law, but its democratic credentials are damaged if it continues to treat some citizens as second class. Parliament should adopt the civil partnerships bill without further delay.

Doing so is not just a matter of law, but of dignity.

Associated documents

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