

BELARUS

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

The state-run Belarusian television channel aired an episode of the youth talk show 'Yes, But' which discussed potential punishments for non-normative sexual orientations and gender identities. The program equated LGBTI identities with paedophilia and labelled LGBTI community practices and identities as "a weapon in the hands of the West and the United States" and "a danger to Belarusian statehood."

Belarusian state media is often characterised by the presence of incorrect and offensive language, as well as hate speech, with half of public communications in 2023 containing harmful language and signs of discrimination towards minorities like LGBTI people. An increase in the use of hate speech in state propaganda against the LGBTI community has been recorded by TG House in Belarus in 2024. State media often portrayed LGBTI people as criminals or a threat to traditional values, using discriminatory language, reinforcing stereotypes, and justifying repressive laws and actions against LGBTI people and organisations.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In February, Prosecutor General Andrei Shved announced that the Prosecutor General's Office plans to introduce a law imposing administrative penalties for "LGBTI propaganda". The draft law has not been tabled yet.

Activist reports indicate that at least ten trans people left Belarus last year due to discrimination and repression. Further information about the context is reported under Legal Gender Recognition and Police and Law Enforcement.

FAMILY

A new concept of National Security has been adopted, emphasising the protection and promotion of the traditional family, defined strictly as a union between a woman and a man by birth.

A trans man from Belarus reported having to flee the country after his son started experiencing bullying at school due to his father's gender identity, and he was subjected to an investigation that could have resulted in the loss of parental rights due to his gender expression.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

In March 2024, the Central District Court of Minsk declared the informational materials of TG House, a trans-led organisation, including its online resources and social media accounts, as extremist. This marked the first instance in Belarusian history where an LGBTI organisation was officially labelled that way.

The court's decision highlights the increasing pressure on the LGBTI community and the State's efforts to suppress any forms of association and expression related to the protection of the rights of sexual and gender minorities.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

At the beginning of 2024, legislative amendments were introduced to expand state bodies' access to personal data, including without individuals' consent.

In January, President Lukashenko signed Decree No. 32 "On Automobile Carriage of Passengers," which grants the transport inspection authority to request and obtain personal data from carriers, dispatchers of irregular connections, and taxis without consent.

In March the Ministry of Culture revised the regulations on the production, distribution, and promotion of erotic materials, which now also encompass content related to sexual education. These changes expanded the definition of "pornography" to include "non-traditional sexual relations and/or behaviour".

In April, amendments were made to the Military Doctrine, introducing significant changes in its classification of internal and external threats. External threats now include the spread of cosmopolitanism and statelessness, as well as ideas that reject traditional values and obligations to defend the country.

According to a Telegram channel linked to law enforcement agencies, a website featuring LGBTI themes has been classified as "extremist material" by a court for the first time.

Starting in October, the Ministry of Information of Belarus started sending letters and emails to bookstores, including online platforms, instructing them to remove from sale any literature that "could harm the national interests" of the country. One of these letters, signed by Deputy Minister Denis Yezersky, was received by Belarusian publisher Zmitter Vishnev who reported that the text highlights the Ministry's ongoing efforts to identify and prevent the spread of "destructive" literature, particularly works that affect the spiritual and moral sphere.

DATA COLLECTION

In Belarus, escalating repression has made accessing information about LGBTI issues increasingly difficult. The government's crackdown has silenced independent voices and dismantled third sector organisations. As reported by TG House Belarus, those who attempt to gather data or advocate for LGBTI rights face significant risks, including arrest and imprisonment.

According to recent data, 40% of LGBTI people reported their mental health as “bad” or “very bad,” a significant 88% are seriously considering emigration and, among those who left Belarus since 2020, over 70% cited political repression as their primary reason for departure.

Human rights defenders report that from 2023 to 2024, LGBTI people have emerged as a new subject of state repression in Belarus.

FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN, OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

In April, police officers assaulted trans activist Yulia who was subsequently forced to flee the country after being subjected to relentless pressure and threats.

A trans woman reported to TG House that, before managing to flee the country, she was subjected to severe abuse during detention. She described being beaten and having to endure stun gun torture, as security forces mocked her gender identity and coerced her into making false confessions.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In March, the HRC passed a resolution calling for the immediate establishment of a group of independent experts to oversee the human rights situation in Belarus.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

Monitoring conducted by TG House from 2019 to 2024 has highlighted systemic issues within the Gender Transition Commission in Belarus, revealing a significant increase in rejection rates for gender transition applications. Notably, during the first commission meeting in 2024, 80% of applicants were denied. The monitoring also uncovered widespread procedural inconsistencies, lack of transparency, and discriminatory practices, including arbitrary criteria for decision-making. These barriers have forced many trans people to abandon their efforts or seek assistance abroad, exacerbating the challenges faced by the trans community in accessing legal gender recognition. TG House also documented a case in 2024 where a trans man in Belarus faced coercion from officials to abandon his gender transition. He reported significant pressure, including threats of losing access to essential documents and social services.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

In February, amendments were made to Decree No. 355, expanding the military’s authority to use weapons, allowing for more arbitrary use of force against civilians and diminishing institutional safeguards.

In February, a trans woman was detained multiple times for “harbouring” an LGBTI person from Ukraine.

During her detention, law enforcement officials forced her into confessing on camera and circulated the video, as well as details about her gender transition and intimate photos.

In April, the House of Representatives passed the draft Law “On Amendments to Laws on the Investigative Committee.” The draft law aims at granting the Investigative Committee the authority to access personal data from information resources and systems without individuals’ consent.

In September, a recent wave of arrests targeting the LGBTI community in Belarus was recorded by TG House, with at least eight trans people being detained since August.

Throughout the September, authorities intensified the crackdown which began in late August, leading to an estimated 15-20 LGBTI people being detained across multiple cities. Among the detainees, trans people were primarily charged with hooliganism, while others faced criminal charges related to the dissemination of pornography. Many of them cited instances of beatings, psychological intimidation, and verbal abuse during detention. TG House clarified the information regarding the total number of detentions, reporting that, in 2024, at least 32 LGBTI activists were detained. According to the organisation, activists consistently reported threats, public shaming, and surveillance, as part of a broader campaign to suppress dissent and align with the state’s promotion of so-called “traditional values.”

In November, Polityvazyinka and TG House reported the case of Evgeniya, a trans woman who experienced significant violence when security forces raided her apartment. As part of the testimony, the organisations reported that police forces found her in her underwear and mocked her, asking, “So are you a woman or a man?” before forcing her to record a video while they ridiculed her gender identity, expressing uncertainty about which cell to place her in due to her gender identity.



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