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Republic of Latvia

Head of state: **Andris Berzins**

Head of government: **Laimdota Straujuma**

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people were inadequately protected against hate crimes. While some positive legislative steps were taken in 2013, the number of stateless people living in the country and being excluded from political rights remained high.

Rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people

In September, the Parliament adopted amendments to legislation on hate crime. However, sexual orientation and gender identity were not included among the explicitly protected grounds in the revised hate crime provisions in the Criminal Code. Criminal law punished incitement to hatred and violence based on race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, disability, age and sex. Only racist motives were regarded as aggravating circumstances.

In 2013, the police recorded 22 cases of violence and incitement to hatred that were motivated by racism or xenophobia. The Latvian NGO MOZAIKA reported four cases of physical attacks against LGBTI people and one case of assault against a gay man with a disability.

On 18 September, the Parliament voted to pass an amendment to the Children's Rights Protection law requiring sexuality education in schools to be based on "traditional family values" and the concept of "marriage" defined as being between a man and a woman only. At the end of the year, the final adoption of the amendment was pending.

Discrimination – stateless persons

According to the UN refugee agency UNHCR, 267,789 people remained stateless within the country as of January 2014.

On 1 October 2013, amendments to the Citizenship Law – aimed at simplifying the procedure for granting citizenship to a child born after 21 August 1991 to a non-citizen or stateless person – were adopted. In April, the UN Human Rights Committee expressed concerns over the high number of stateless people who continued to live in the country without access to political rights, while acknowledging progress in this area.

Torture and other ill-treatment

In December 2013, the UN Committee against Torture highlighted that the definition of torture included in Article 24 did not contain all the elements set out in the Convention against Torture and created loopholes for impunity. The Committee expressed concern that torture was not defined as a specific criminal offence in the Criminal Code and that some acts of torture or complicity in perpetrating acts of torture were subject to a 10-year statute of limitations.

The Committee also pointed to allegations of violence and ill-treatment perpetrated by law enforcement agents and highlighted the absence of an independent mechanism to investigate such allegations.

Women's rights

Domestic violence was not defined as a specific crime. In December, the UN Committee against Torture expressed concern over the absence of protection measures and the inadequate provision of shelters for victims of domestic violence.

Refugees and asylum-seekers

In April, the UN Human Rights Committee expressed concern that the detention of asylum-seekers, including those as young as 14, was not just used as a measure of last resort. The Committee noted that the non-suspensive effect of appeals of negative decisions under the accelerated asylum procedure increased the risk of individuals being returned to countries where they were at risk of serious human rights violations or abuses.

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