

The State of the World's Human Rights; Estonia 2024

The lack of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation persisted. The definition of rape was still not based on consent. Parliament adopted amendments to the State Borders Act which violate the European Convention on Human Rights and the UN Refugee Convention. Same-sex couples faced discrimination under the Names Act.

Discrimination

In May, the CERD Committee raised concerns about Estonia's continued lack of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation. The committee recommended adopting a national plan to end statelessness and address the persistently high number of people with undetermined citizenship. It also recommended that Estonia end its "punitive approach" to the promotion of the official language, in particular regarding access to employment.

Women's and girls' rights

In its first evaluation report based on a visit in February, the Group of Experts monitoring the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (GREVIO) welcomed the efforts taken towards implementing the Convention but noted that measures did not yet address all forms of violence against women in a holistic and comprehensive manner, as well as the lack of a consent-based definition of rape in the criminal code.

Refugees' and migrants' rights

In July, the government fast-tracked amendments to the State Borders Act to allow border guards to summarily and forcibly return migrants and asylum seekers without an individual decision and to refuse applications for international protection if the claim is not made at a designated border crossing. Both UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, and the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights had raised concerns previously and urged the Estonian parliament to refrain from such provisions, which violate the European Convention on Human Rights and the UN Refugee Convention. They reminded the parliament that protection against forced returns is a non-derogable right and thus should not be denied because a country faces an emergency situation or because people arrive in an irregular manner.

LGBTI people's rights

Despite several Supreme Court rulings that the fundamental right to the family also extends to same-sex couples who live in a registered partnership, it was still not possible to have a common surname under the Names Act without being married, effectively preventing same-sex couples from sharing a surname.