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Ethiopia's Compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child

Alternative Report on Discrimination and Violence against LGBTIQ+ Children in Ethiopia

Submitted by The Advocates for Human Rights,

a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with ECOSOC since 1996

and

House of Guramayle

for the Committee on the Rights of the Child's review of the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Ethiopia

Submitted 15 December 2025

Founded in 1983, **The Advocates for Human Rights** ("The Advocates") is a volunteer-based non-governmental organization committed to the impartial promotion and protection of international human rights standards and the rule of law. The Advocates conducts a range of programs to promote human rights in the United States and around the world, including monitoring and fact finding, direct legal representation, education and training, and publication. The Advocates is the primary provider of legal services to low-income asylum seekers in the Upper Midwest region of the United States, including LGBTIQ+ individuals who have experienced discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics.

House of Guramayle is a collaborative intersectional platform led by socially and politically marginalized Ethiopian activists based around the world to foster safe spaces and inclusive cultures for the LGBTQIA* Horn of Africa and other marginalized communities. Through human rights advocacy, counternarrative work, community engagement, and movement building, House of Guramayle works to equip LGBTQIA* communities with tools and resources to live dignified lives.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Ethiopia's domestic legal framework criminalizes consensual same-sex sexual conduct and provides no explicit protection against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or sex characteristics. Articles 629 and 630 of the 2004 Criminal Code of Ethiopia punish consensual same-sex relations with imprisonment,¹ and related provisions have been interpreted to target perceived "promotion" of homosexuality.² Criminalization leaves LGBTIQ+ people at serious risk of harm and systematic exclusion, particularly when combined with social stigma and lack of legal remedies.³
2. These laws, combined with deeply entrenched stigma and recent waves of online and offline incitement to violence against LGBTIQ+ communities, create a hostile environment for LGBTIQ+ children and adolescents as well as for children in LGBTIQ+ families.⁴ LGBTIQ+ people experience severe discrimination, threats, and violence, including young adults, as well as pervasive fear and concealment. Lesbian, bisexual, queer, and transgender women and other marginalized identities are particularly at risk of violence, discrimination, and exclusion.⁵
3. Developments since October 2024 have further entrenched risks to LGBTIQ+ people, including children. Previous human rights reporting by the co-authors also highlight growing anti-LGBTQ+ campaigning and limited digital rights and protections, leaving LGBTQ+ individuals with little recourse when material calling for violence circulates online.⁶
4. In this report we use the acronym LGBTIQ to refer to individuals who self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intesex, and/or queer. These terms necessarily do not include everyone who may experience violations of their human rights on the basis of their real or perceived SOGIESC status, which is why we also include a "+" with the acronym. Any use of a modified acronym is intentional in that we are speaking only about certain members of the LGBTIQ+ population.

¹ The Criminal Code of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, art. 629 and 630.

² The Criminal Code of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, art. 640.

³ *Ethiopia Stakeholder Report for the United Nations Universal Periodic Review*, by The Advocates for Human Rights and House of Guramayle, April 8, 2024, 4.

⁴ *Ethiopia Stakeholder Report for the United Nations Universal Periodic Review*, by The Advocates for Human Rights and House of Guramayle, April 8, 2024, 4-6.

⁵ *Ethiopia Stakeholder Report for the United Nations Universal Periodic Review*, by The Advocates for Human Rights and House of Guramayle, April 8, 2024, 4-6.

⁶ *Ethiopia Stakeholder Report for the United Nations Universal Periodic Review*, by The Advocates for Human Rights and House of Guramayle, April 8, 2024, 10.

Ethiopia fails to uphold its obligations under the CRC

I. LGBTIQ+ children face discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and/or sex characteristics (List of Issues, para. 3)

5. In its 2015 concluding observations on the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of Ethiopia (“2015 Concluding Observations”), the Committee on the Rights of the Child (the “Committee”) expressed concern about persisting discrimination against vulnerable groups of children⁷ and urged Ethiopia to strengthen its legal and policy framework to ensure non-discrimination and equal access to education, health, and protection for all children. The Committee also noted persistent disparities in access to education and health services for marginalized groups of children and called on Ethiopia to ensure that all children can enjoy these rights without discrimination.⁸ The Committee’s concluding observations address gender discrimination but do not explicitly address discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or sex characteristics.
6. In its 2024 list of issues in relation to the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Ethiopia (“2024 List of Issues”), however, the Committee expressly asked Ethiopia to provide information on measures taken “[to] address discrimination against children and adolescents on the basis of, inter alia,...sexual orientation and gender identity,...”⁹
7. Ethiopia’s combined sixth and seventh periodic report (the “State Party Report”) states that the National Child Policy identifies the principle of non-discrimination as a main principle and notes that the Constitution and other laws prohibit discrimination.¹⁰ The report, however, does not mention children who identify as LGBTIQ+ or consider discrimination on the basis of SOGIESC. Further, the State Party Report does not address the impact of the criminalization of consensual same-sex sexual activity on children and adolescents.
8. The State Party Report describes Ethiopia’s efforts to expand access to education and health services and refers generally to non-discrimination.¹¹ The discrimination that is described in the State Party Report, however, is focused on children with disabilities and children from rural areas of Ethiopia.¹² The State Party Report does not discuss LGBTIQ+ children or gender diverse children, discrimination in schools and health facilities based on real or perceived SOGIESC, or measures to ensure that LGBTIQ+ children can access age-appropriate health information and services.

⁷ Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding observations on the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of Ethiopia*, July 10, 2015, UN Doc. CRC/C/ETH/CO/4-5, ¶6.

⁸ Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding observations on the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of Ethiopia*, Jul. 10, 2015, UN Doc. CRC/C/ETH/CO/4-5, ¶55, ¶61.

⁹ Committee on the Rights of the Child, *List of issues in relation to the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Ethiopia*, Oct. 18, 2024, UN Doc. CRC/C/ETH/Q/6-7, ¶3a.

¹⁰ Convention on the Rights of the Child, *Combined sixth and seventh reports submitted by Ethiopia under article 44 of the Convention, due in 2020*, (June 22, 2022), U.N. Doc. CRC/C/ETH/6-7, ¶ 43.

¹¹ Convention on the Rights of the Child, *Combined sixth and seventh reports submitted by Ethiopia under article 44 of the Convention, due in 2020*, (June 22, 2022), U.N. Doc. CRC/C/ETH/6-7, ¶43-49.

¹² Convention on the Rights of the Child, *Combined sixth and seventh reports submitted by Ethiopia under article 44 of the Convention, due in 2020*, (June 22, 2022), U.N. Doc. CRC/C/ETH/6-7, ¶44, ¶47.

9. Ethiopia's Criminal Code (Proclamation No. 414/2004) criminalizes consensual same-sex sexual conduct, with Article 629 punishing consensual same-sex acts with imprisonment, and Article 630 increases related penalties under aggravated circumstances.¹³
10. In addition to its criminalization of consensual same-sex sexual conduct, Ethiopia lacks laws that permit transgender individuals to legally change their gender. Transgender men are legally considered to be women and transgender women are legally considered to be men, so transgender individuals who have consensual relationships with cisgender partners of a different gender (for example, transgender men with cisgender women and transgender women with cisgender men) may be treated as falling under the same Criminal Code provisions that punish "homosexual" conduct.¹⁴
11. According to analysis conducted by the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association ("ILGA World"), these provisions continue to apply and no law explicitly protects individuals from discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or sex characteristics.¹⁵ Restrictions in media and civil society laws have been used to suppress discussion and advocacy related to LGBTIQ+ rights.¹⁶
12. Although these provisions ostensibly target adults, their existence legitimizes SOGIESC-based stigma and discrimination, discourages institutions from recognizing LGBTIQ+ children or addressing their needs, and criminalizes adolescents engaging in consensual same-sex sexual behavior.
13. Reports indicate a climate of intense stigma and fear surrounding LGBTIQ+ identities in Ethiopia.¹⁷ Individuals report hiding their sexual orientation or gender identity from family, schools, and communities due to fear of violence, expulsion, or arrest.¹⁸ This fear-based, stigmatizing climate is reasonably likely to have a direct, negative affect upon children and adolescents who are, or are perceived to be, LGBTIQ+.
14. LGBTIQ+ people report being beaten, confined, or forced into "prayer" or "healing" rituals by family members because of their perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.¹⁹ Some of these cases involve individuals who were minors at the time of the abuse. Children who are gender diverse or who do not conform to gender norms

¹³ The Criminal Code of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, art. 629 and 630.

¹⁴ *Ethiopia Stakeholder Report for the United Nations Universal Periodic Review*, by The Advocates for Human Rights and House of Guramayle, April 8, 2024, 2.

¹⁵ ILGA World, *Our Identities Under Arrest: A global overview on the enforcement of laws criminalising consensual same-sex sexual acts between adults and diverse gender expressions*, 2nd Edition, by Kellyn Botha (Geneva: ILGA, Nov. 2023), 69.

¹⁶ Email from Ethiopian NGO to The Advocates for Human Rights (Dec. 15, 2025) (on file with authors).

¹⁷ *Ethiopia Stakeholder Report for the United Nations Universal Periodic Review*, by The Advocates for Human Rights and House of Guramayle, April 8, 2024.

¹⁸ *Ethiopia Stakeholder Report for the United Nations Universal Periodic Review*, by The Advocates for Human Rights and House of Guramayle, April 8, 2024, ¶46 and ¶47.

¹⁹ Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, *Conversion Practices on LGBT+ People* (2023), 62, accessed December 8, 2025,

https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2014_2019/plmrep/COMMITTEES/LIBE/DV/2023/07-17/Study_PolDepC_ConversionPracticesonLGBTPeople_752.385_EN.pdf.

described being shamed, restricted in their movements, or threatened with being thrown out of their homes.²⁰

15. Civil society reports describe LGBTIQ+ students and gender diverse children experiencing bullying, harassment, and isolation in schools, including name-calling, physical intimidation, and social exclusion from peers and teachers. Many children try to hide aspects of their identity at school, skip classes, or drop out entirely to avoid abuse.²¹ The Ethiopian government has not adopted national anti-bullying policies that explicitly prohibit SOGIESC-based harassment or provide guidance to schools on supporting LGBTIQ+ students.
16. As noted, LGBTIQ+ students and gender diverse children face bullying, harassment, and exclusion at school. The lack of explicit protections against SOGIESC-based discrimination contributes to school dropout—some LGBTIQ+ adolescents leave school early after repeated bullying or after their families move them to avoid perceived “shame”—as well as self-censorship and invisibility, as children hide their gender expression or relationships and avoid participation in school activities to reduce attention.²²
17. The criminalization of same-sex conduct and pervasive stigma around SOGIESC is reasonably likely to impede adolescents’ access to health services, particularly sexual and reproductive health and HIV-related services. Men who have sex with men (MSM) and women who have sex with women (WSW) may avoid health facilities or conceal their behavior from providers for fear of discrimination, breaches of confidentiality, or referral to law enforcement.²³ Gender diverse and intersex adolescents face additional barriers, including lack of provider knowledge, pathologizing attitudes, and absence of respectful, informed consent-based care.²⁴
18. There are reports that LGBTIQ+ people face discrimination in accessing health services and that providers sometimes refuse care or subject patients to degrading treatment.²⁵ For LGBTIQ+ children and adolescents, these barriers are reasonably likely to undermine their rights to health and development, increase risks of sexually transmitted infections, and exacerbate mental health problems, including depression, anxiety, and suicidality.
19. Since at least 2023, inflammatory social media content and online campaigns have singled out people perceived to be LGBTIQ+, sometimes using doctored images or

²⁰ Email from Ethiopian NGO to The Advocates for Human Rights (Dec. 15, 2025) (on file with authors).

²¹ Email from Ethiopian NGO to The Advocates for Human Rights (Dec. 15, 2025) (on file with authors).

²² Email from Ethiopian NGO to The Advocates for Human Rights (Dec. 15, 2025) (on file with authors).

²³ Tadele, G., & Amde, W. K. (2019). *Health needs, health care seeking behaviour, and utilization of health services among lesbians, gays and bisexuals in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*. International Journal for Equity in Health, 1.

²⁴ McLaughlin AJ, Nonoyama S, Glupe L, Bosse JD. *Systemic transphobia and ongoing barriers to healthcare for transgender and nonbinary people: A historical analysis of #TransHealthFail*. PLOS Digit Health. 2025 Mar 12.

²⁵ United States Department of State, *Advancing Health Care Nondiscrimination Protections for LGBTIQ+ Communities* (2022), 15, accessed Dec. 8, 2015, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/advancing-health-care-nondiscrimination-protections-for-lgbtqi-communities/#:~:text=LGBTQI+%20people%2C%20especially%20transgender%2C%20nonbinary,be%20denied%20good%20medical%20care.>

videos and calling for violence.²⁶ House of Guramayle, a co-author of this report, reported that a pastor's viral online videos in 2023 triggered a wave of threats and attacks against LGBTIQ+ people.²⁷

20. These campaigns are reasonably likely to increase fear in young people who use social media and messaging applications. Adolescents may fear that friends, family members, or classmates might expose them online, leading to violence or expulsion from home or school. Civil society organizations report an increase in requests for assistance from young people terrified of online threats and surveillance.²⁸ Further, anti-LGBTQ+ campaigning is increasing and that limited digital rights protections leave LGBTIQ+ individuals particularly exposed to “outing” and harassment online.²⁹
21. LGBTIQ+ children from ethnic minority groups, internally displaced communities, or families affected by conflict face compounded risks, as displacement and poverty make it more difficult to access safe housing, education, and health services, and fear of discrimination discourages them from seeking help from authorities.³⁰
22. There are credible reports that LGBTIQ+ persons in Ethiopia do not have access to effective legal remedies for discrimination and face police harassment when they seek help.³¹ In this context, LGBTIQ+ children are likely to have little trust that State institutions will protect their rights.
23. **Suggested Recommendations to the Government of Ethiopia:**
 - Decriminalize consensual same-sex sexual conduct by repealing or amending Articles 629 and 630 of the Criminal Code and any related provisions that criminalize consensual same-sex intimacy.
 - Adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation that explicitly prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics; covers children in all spheres of life, including education, health care, housing, and access to public services; and provides accessible remedies and sanctions for SOGIESC-based discrimination.
 - Integrate explicit SOGIESC protections into child protection policies and mechanisms, including national child policies, case management guidelines, and referral systems.

²⁶ Cara Anna, *LGBTQ+ people in Ethiopia blame attacks on their community on inciteful and lingering TikTok videos*, AP News, Aug. 11, 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/ethiopia-tiktok-lgbtq-threats-attacksf4ace0e1968d6bad46bb05710feac5cf>.

²⁷ Kaine Pieri, *Outed on TikTok in Ethiopia: 'How a dance nearly cost me my life'*, British Broadcasting Company, December 5, 2023, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-67612331>.

²⁸ Email from Ethiopian NGO to The Advocates for Human Rights (Dec. 15, 2025) (on file with authors).

²⁹ *Ethiopia Stakeholder Report for the United Nations Universal Periodic Review*, by The Advocates for Human Rights and House of Guramayle, April 8, 2024, 2.

³⁰ Diab JL, Al-Azzeh D, *Inclusive inquiry: a compassionate journey in trauma-informed qualitative research with GBV survivors from displaced communities*, *Frontiers in Psychology*, July 25, 2024, 4.

³¹ United States Department of State, *Ethiopia 2020 Human Rights Report* (2020), 33, accessed December 8, 2025, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ETHIOPIA-2020-HUMAN-RIGHTS-REPORT.pdf>

- Train police, prosecutors, judges, social workers, and child protection officials on children’s rights and SOGIESC-based discrimination, emphasizing that real or perceived SOGIESC can never justify violence, abuse, or denial of services.
- Ensure that LGBTIQ+ children and gender diverse children can safely report violence and discrimination, including by establishing confidential reporting channels and collaborating with civil society organizations trusted by LGBTIQ+ communities.
- Collect disaggregated data, with appropriate safeguards, on discrimination and violence against children based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics, including perceived SOGIESC, while protecting privacy and security.
- Adopt and implement national safe schools policies that explicitly prohibit bullying, harassment, and discrimination based on real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics, and require schools to respond effectively to such incidents.
- Ensure that all children, including LGBTIQ+ and gender diverse children, have access to quality health services without discrimination, including sexual and reproductive health services, HIV prevention and treatment, and mental health care.
- Train healthcare providers on SOGIESC, confidentiality, and non-discrimination, and adopt clear policies prohibiting denial of care or degrading treatment based on real or perceived SOGIESC.
- Review and amend health and consent policies to ensure that adolescents can access confidential health information and services, including HIV testing and counseling, without fear that their SOGIESC will be disclosed to family members or authorities without their consent.
- Design, implement, and monitor education and health programs affecting LGBTIQ+ children and gender-diverse youth.

II. LGBTIQ+ children are at risk of violence and abuse (List of Issues, para. 15)

24. In its 2015 Concluding Observations, the Committee expressed concern about the high prevalence of violence against children in Ethiopia, including corporal punishment and harmful practices, and urged Ethiopia to strengthen legal prohibitions and protective measures.³² The Committee’s 2024 List of Issues asks Ethiopia to provide information on measures taken to prevent and address violence and abuse, including for particularly vulnerable groups.³³
25. The State Party Report highlights general measures taken by Ethiopia to combat violence against children but does not identify LGBTIQ+ children as a group at risk or acknowledge SOGIESC-based violence, including online hate speech, “outing” campaigns, and incitement to violence.

³² Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding observations on the combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of Ethiopia*, Jul. 10, 2015, UN Doc. CRC/C/ETH/CO/4-5, ¶41.

³³ Committee on the Rights of the Child, *List of issues in relation to the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Ethiopia*, Oct. 18, 2024, UN Doc. CRC/C/ETH/Q/6-7, ¶15a.

26. House of Guramayle and other organizations report a sharp increase in threats, attacks, and harassment targeting LGBTIQ+ people in recent years. A 2023 press release described an “alarming escalation” of hostility following viral videos and social media posts urging violence against LGBTIQ+ people.³⁴ Reports also indicate growing anti-LGBTQ+ campaigning in the country and limited protections for digital rights, underscoring that these campaigns heighten the risk of physical attacks.³⁵
27. Young people identifying as LGBTIQ+ or gender diverse are especially vulnerable to violence at home and in their communities when family members, neighbors, or peers consume such hate speech and incitement. Young people report being threatened, beaten, or forced to undergo religious “healing” after their families discovered or suspected their SOGIESC. Children in LGBTIQ+ families – for example, where a parent is known or perceived to be LGBTIQ+ – are exposed to threats against their parents, may witness violence, and can be ostracized or bullied by peers.³⁶
28. Social media platforms can be used to “expose” people suspected of being LGBTIQ+, sometimes with identifying information and calls for violence. Adolescents are particularly active online and risk being targeted by peers or strangers.³⁷
29. While Ethiopia has adopted some cybercrime and media regulations,³⁸ these have not been used to protect LGBTIQ+ children from digital harassment or hate speech and are sometimes applied in ways that restrict civic space.³⁹ There is no evidence to suggest that authorities systematically investigate or prosecute online incitement to violence against LGBTIQ+ people, even when internet or other media content clearly targets individuals or groups. The 2024 UPR Stakeholder Report notes that LGBTQ+ individuals in Ethiopia enjoy limited digital rights and protections, which contributes to an environment where online harassment can escalate without effective State response.⁴⁰
30. **Suggested Recommendations to the Government of Ethiopia:**
 - Publicly condemn all forms of violence, hate speech, and incitement to violence against people targeted on the basis of real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or sex characteristics, including when they are children or adolescents.
 - Amend and effectively enforce legislation to prohibit advocacy of national, racial, or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility, or violence, ensuring that such provisions also protect LGBTIQ+ children and LGBTIQ+ communities.

³⁴ Press Release, House of Guramayle, Press Release on the LGBTQIA+ Situation in Ethiopia (August 6, 2023). Also available online at <https://houseofguramayle.org/news/press-release-on-the-lgbtqia-situation-in-ethiopia-06-august-2023/>.

³⁵ *Ethiopia Stakeholder Report for the United Nations Universal Periodic Review*, by The Advocates for Human Rights and House of Guramayle, April 8, 2024, 2.

³⁶ Email from Ethiopian NGO to The Advocates for Human Rights (Dec. 15, 2025) (on file with authors).

³⁷ Email from Ethiopian NGO to The Advocates for Human Rights (Dec. 15, 2025) (on file with authors).

³⁸ Strathmore Univesity, “Ethiopia’s Personal Data Protection Proclamation of 2024 and its Budding Digital Identity Regime,” accessed December 8, 2025, <https://cipit.org/ethiopias-personal-data-protection-proclamation-of-2024-and-its-budding-digital-identity-regime/>.

³⁹ Email from Ethiopian NGO to The Advocates for Human Rights (Dec. 15, 2025) (on file with authors).

⁴⁰ *Ethiopia Stakeholder Report for the United Nations Universal Periodic Review*, by The Advocates for Human Rights and House of Guramayle, April 8, 2024, 2.

- Develop child-sensitive online safety policies and mechanisms to address SOGIESC-based cyberbullying, doxxing, and online “outing,” including clear takedown procedures and cooperation with social media platforms.
- Train child protection workers, teachers, and law enforcement on identifying and responding to SOGIESC-based violence, including online violence, in ways that respect confidentiality and do not further endanger children.
- Support community-based and school-based prevention programs that promote respect for diversity, challenge harmful gender stereotypes, and provide age-appropriate information about SOGIESC and children’s rights.
- Ensure access to trauma-informed psychosocial services for children and adolescents who experience SOGIESC-based violence or harassment, including confidential counseling and referrals.