Joint statement: Kazakhstan must withdraw its plans to adopt anti-LGBTI laws

article, non-discrimination, lgbti, youth & adolescents

On 2 September 2025, six human rights organisations expressed deep concern over recent developments in Kazakhstan, where authorities have announced further steps toward drafting and adopting legislation to ban the dissemination of LGBTI-related content.

According to one of the media outlets, on 30 July 2025, the government-organised National Endowment for Prosperity (NEP) claimed to have found that “67,3% of respondents are in favor of restricting LGBT propaganda”, without releasing the study or disclosing its methodology. Some Kazakh MPs have already voiced their readiness to draft a relevant bill in response to these alleged findings.

Moving forward with any proposed legislation banning so-called anti-LGBTI “propaganda” would significantly undermine the rights to freedom of expression, non-discrimination, and access to information in Kazakhstan. We urge the Government and Parliament of Kazakhstan to adhere to their constitutional guarantees and international human rights obligations, including recent commitments made under the United Nations’ 2024–2025 Universal Periodic Review (UPR) cycle, and refrain from drafting and adopting any such legislation.

The harm of anti-LGBTI “propaganda” laws: what the evidence says

Contrary to claims made by the NEP in Kazakhstan and its affiliated actors, international research overwhelmingly shows that anti-LGBTI “propaganda” laws fail to protect children and instead increase stigma, bullying, and mental health risks for LGBTI youth; violate international law, including rights to freedom of expression, equality, and access to information; and foster climates of fear and silence, weakening democratic institutions.

International human rights bodies have also consistently raised concern about anti-LGBTI “propaganda” laws in a number of countries. For example, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child has concluded that while Russia’s anti-LGBTI “propaganda” laws are presented as measures to protect children, they instead foster the stigmatisation of and discrimination against LGBTI persons, including children, and those from LGBTI families. The Committee expressed particular concern that the vague definitions of propaganda used in such laws enable the targeting and ongoing persecution of the LGBTI community, including through abuse and violence, especially against underage LGBTI rights activists.

The Venice Commission’s Opinion from 2021 on the Hungarian anti-LGBTI “propaganda” law found it to be incompatible with the European Convention on Human Rights and international human rights standards, including the law’s amendments regarding the educational sector. It found that the law “fails to comply with the positive obligation of Hungary to ensure that the educational system provides children with objective and non-biased information on gender identity and sexual orientation and protects them from discrimination on the same grounds. On the contrary: the amendments contribute to creating a “threatening environment, where LGBTQI children can be subject to health-related risks, bullying and harassment.”

According to the 3rd EU LGBTIQ Survey, conducted in 2023, negative changes in law and policy were found to be the main reasons for prejudice, intolerance and violence among 15-17 year old adolescents in Hungary (79% of respondents), in Italy (63% of respondents), and in Poland (62% of respondents).

Research by The Trevor Project, a US-based NGO, shows that LGBTI youth in repressive legal environments face significantly higher rates of depression, anxiety, and suicide attempts.

A study by the American Psychological Association concludes that affirmative information about LGBTI identities supports healthier psychosocial development in adolescents.

Kazakhstan's UPR commitments must be honoured

Kazakhstan accepted several SOGIESC-specific recommendations during its most recent UPR review, including to:
– "Ensure the protection of LGBTI persons against discrimination and violence"
– "Promote tolerance and awareness of diversity through education"
– "Take steps to address societal prejudice and ensure equality before the law"

Moving forward with an anti-LGBTI "propaganda" law would directly contradict these international commitments and undermine Kazakhstan's credibility on the world stage.

Our call to the Parliament and Government of Kazakhstan:

- Reject in full any draft law or initiative banning so-called "LGBTI propaganda";
- Uphold the principles of the Constitution of Kazakhstan, including equality, dignity, and freedom of expression;
- Implement all accepted UPR recommendations related to sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC);
- Ensure meaningful and safe participation of LGBTI civil society in public life and policymaking.

The introduction of such a law would not protect children; it would harm them. It would not strengthen society; it would divide it. Kazakhstan has an opportunity to uphold its constitutional values and international obligations. We urge it to do so.

Signed by:

- ILGA-Europe
- International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
- IGLYO – The International LGBTQI Youth & Student Organisation
- World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT)
- International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR)
- TGEU – Trans Europe and Central Asia

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References:

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6. American Psychological Association. Resolution on Gender and Sexual Orientation Diversity in Children and Adolescents in Schools. https://www.apa.org/about/policy/orientation-diversity

Other studies:

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https://memorialcenter.org/uploads/LGTB_RIGHTS_21_07_25_ba27d41d9e.pdf

The inclusion of LGBT people in education settings of paramount importance to “leaving no one behind”
https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2019/10/inclusion-lgbt-people-education-settings-paramount-importance#_ftn13

Call for the effective implementation of SDG Goal 3: Removing barriers and closing the gap of health disparities for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender-diverse people
https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements-and-speeches/2019/10/call-effective-implementation-sdg-goal-3-removing-barriers-and

United Nations entities call on States to act urgently to end violence and discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) adults, adolescents and children. https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/reproductive-health/joint_lgbti_statement_en.pdf?sfvrsn=d7411ba4_33&download=true