Kazakhstan’s LGBTI community requests urgent support against anti-LGBT petition

article, anti-gender movement, trans activists

Kazakhstan’s LGBTI community is raising urgent alarms over recent actions aimed at curtailing their rights and freedoms in the country. These clampdowns are being carried out by various actors including anti-gender initiatives and the Kazakh government.

First and foremost, communities need support to oppose an anti-LGBT petition currently being considered by the Ministry of Culture and Information of Kazakhstan. A decision on the petition will be made in early August, so there is little time left to act. In the appeal, Kazakhstan’s LGBTI community makes concrete recommendations and suggestions for the support it urgently needs, including writing a complaint to the Kazakh authorities.

How you can help

Anyone, regardless of where they live in the world, can submit a complaint about the petition. Simply write to the Ministry of Culture and Information of Kazakhstan demanding that the petition is rejected. The petition violates the rights and freedoms of LGBTI people in Kazakhstan, contradicting the Constitution and Articles 19 and 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights ratified by Kazakhstan.

Write your complaint, sign it, or use an electronic signature, and send it to k.kense@mki.gov.kz by 3 August 2024.

Recommendations to Kazakhstan’s government

Kazakhstan will undergo the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process from the end of 2024 to the beginning of 2025. UPR is a unique Human Rights Council mechanism where each UN Member State has its human rights records reviewed by peers every 4.5 years. Therefore we strongly urge you to include the following recommendations for Kazakhstan to improve its human rights in your email:

- Adoption of an anti-discrimination law that mentions sexual orientation and gender identity as a ground for protection from discrimination,
- Ensuring a simple, accessible and transparent process for legal and medical transition for trans people,
- Stop anti-LGBTI initiatives.

TGEU stands in solidarity with LGBTI people in Kazakhstan and rejects attempts to criminalise and stigmatise the LGBTI community.

Read the appeal from the Kazakhstan LGBTI community below and learn how to support them.

Appeal from the Kazakhstan LGBTI movement to the global LGBTI community

We, LGBTI activists and allies in Kazakhstan, call upon the global LGBTI community to support us by spreading information about the situation in our country and region. There are attempts to introduce draconian measures

aimed at further restricting the LGBTI movement and threatening the right to freedom of expression for LGBTI people in Kazakhstan. Since the beginning of 2024, the LGBTI movement in Kazakhstan has faced unprecedented attacks from the authorities and anti-LGBTI groups.

In February, a website aimed at informing LGBTI children and teens was blocked. In March, Almaty authorities banned feminists from organising a women's rally, justifying their decision with LGBTI-phobic statements from the population. In April, several members of the Kazakh Parliament attempted to introduce a legislative ban on mentioning LGBTI in the media. Additionally, two other members proposed criminal liability for the same "propaganda" of LGBTI people, with punishments of up to seven years in prison. These attempts were followed by a series of raids conducted by law enforcement targeting LGBTI clubs and parties in major cities, during which hundreds of LGBTI people were illegally detained. In June, the Kazakhstan Union of Parents, an anti-gender organisation, initiated a petition on a special state platform calling for measures to ban the so-called LGBTI "propaganda" in Kazakhstan.

As stipulated by the law, authorities are required to consider petitions that receive more than 50,000 signatures at the government level. To ensure the petition gained the required number of signatures, various government agencies allegedly forced their employees, and school principals pressured teachers, to support the anti-LGBTI petition. As a result of this extensive use of administrative resources, the petition received the necessary signatures , and the Ministry of Culture and Information has begun the process of reviewing it.

We believe that the state's registration of this petition was illegal. The law governing petitions prohibits the state from accepting petitions that restrict human rights of people. The Ministry of Culture and Information of Kazakhstan should have rejected it initially, but instead, they accepted it for consideration.

This indicates that the Kazakh authorities are interested in further restricting the rights of LGBTI people in Kazakhstan. In our country, it is impossible to register LGBTI organisations, organise pride marches, and the right to transgender transition is not accessible. Legal gender recognition involves discriminatory norms. At the beginning of 2024, the President of Kazakhstan signed a law prohibiting LGBTI people from mentoring and adopting orphans. Additionally, the right to equal marriage for LGBTI people is prohibited by the Code on Marriage and Family, which explicitly states that "marriage between persons of the same sex is not allowed" (Clause 1, Article 11).

At the national level, we are taking all possible measures to oppose any attempts to prohibit the so-called "propaganda" of LGBTI people, which, as a phenomenon, is absurd and does not exist. We hope that Kazakhstan, as a country that values and is highly concerned about its international image, will abandon this initiative under the influence of international criticism. We hope that the more foreign and international media write about these issues in Kazakhstan, the more effective our collective advocacy will be.

In this regard, we appeal to all of you to help spread information about the alarming situation in Kazakhstan. To do this, we ask the following:

- Connect us with journalists/reporters in your countries, who are ready to talk with us and share more on the situation regarding LGBTI rights in Kazakhstan.
- If you are in touch with members of parliament in your countries who are on international affairs committees, inform them about the situation with LGBTI rights in Kazakhstan and ask them to express concerns to the Parliament of Kazakhstan within the framework of international inter-parliamentary relations.
- If you are in touch with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of your country, also inform them and ask them to send an appropriate diplomatic note of concern to the government of Kazakhstan.
- Organise protests in front of Kazakhstan embassies and consulates in your cities, if it is safe and possible in your country. **If you decide to help us in this way, please first coordinate the text of the calls and banners with us**.

Kazakhstan is currently the only country in Central Asia where the LGBTI movement can still openly conduct advocacy work. We aim to at least maintain this space, and ideally, expand it. In this effort, we hope for your support.
If you have any questions or need further information, please contact us at the following email: gbrhrkz@gmail.com