



KAZAKHSTAN

ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

In January, a petition was initiated by a group of 135 Kazakhstani parents to ban or restrict Kazakhstan's first website dedicated to Selftanu, which aimed to share resources for LGBTI youth. In February, the Ministry of Culture and Information announced the banning of the website. The Ministry claimed that the measure was enacted to protect children's rights and to align with Kazakhstan's cultural and traditional values.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In February, the creators of the Selftanu website reported receiving numerous threats and bias-motivated speech, both from within Kazakhstan, and from Russia.

In May, the statement posted by the U.S. Embassy in Kazakhstan celebrating International LGBTI Rights Day was met with significant backlash by Kazakhstani authorities, according to NewTimes.kz.

In October, Rinat Zaitov, a member of Kazakhstan's Majilis and the AMANAT party, called for a ban on 'LGBTI propaganda' in the country, describing the LGBTI and feminist communities as enemies seeking to "poison" the nation. In a parliamentary inquiry addressed to the Prosecutor General and the Chairman of the National Security Committee, Zaitov condemned LGBTI activism as a "villainous organisation" that he claimed was corrupting the youth through its propaganda. Prime Minister Olzhas Bektenov responded to the inquiry by declaring that the government of Kazakhstan is set to conduct a study on the social, psychological, and medical impact of the LGBTI movement on young people. The prime minister also noted that organisations such as Kaleidoscope, Feminita, and KazFem, which work on LGBTI rights, have faced legal challenges, including administrative responsibility for holding unapproved public actions.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Over 80 cases of bias-motivated violence and discrimination against LGBTI people were documented in the time period from August 2023 to August 2024. Verbal violence, including hate speech, blackmail, outing and threats of outing, was most prevalent. In approximately 21% of cases, the injured person suffered material damage; in about 15%, physical damage. About 17% of the offences were linked to so-called "hate groups", including local anti-gender or xenophobic movements and other similar associations.

A trend of so-called fake dates was recorded, where an LGBTI person was lured into meeting a potential partner online, and was physically attacked upon meeting them. In five cases, attempts were made to extort money, as the injured party was blackmailed

by the fact that their sexual orientation and/or gender identity (SOGI) would be revealed to relatives and on the internet. One victim managed to achieve partial justice in such a case in court in 2024, with several perpetrators from a larger group being held accountable.

BODILY INTEGRITY

According to reports by Education Community, a young lesbian woman was stripped of her legal rights when she was falsely diagnosed with schizophrenia as a result of conversion therapy efforts by her mother. The woman's partner managed to obtain guardianship over her, but she was left dependent for several years until the legal opportunity came for medical re-evaluation.

DATA COLLECTION

In April, Orda.kz released an interview with Victoria Primak, a trans rights activist, revealing the often-shared experience of the trans community in Kazakhstan with discrimination. According to Primak's documentation work, trans individuals are among the most vulnerable groups in the country, with over 80% of trans respondents reporting having experienced discrimination or violence due to their gender identity.

In July, research by the Alma-TQ initiative revealed numerous instances of discrimination and abuse from law enforcement towards trans and gender-diverse individuals, including blackmail, threats, and refusal to investigate complaints.

EDUCATION

In approximately 7% of cases documented by Education Community, university administration and faculty members outed pupils on the basis of their personal bias and used the stigma surrounding the exposed SOGI of the victims as an excuse for abuse, including hate speech, violations of student privacy, and deliberate grade reduction.

EMPLOYMENT

Trans people continue to face significant barriers in terms of employment. In September, a trans woman named Alice was fired from the hostel where she worked due to the owner and roommates suspecting her of being gay. Later, she was also denied housing in that same hostel.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In March, the government-organised National Quryltay (an informational congress of government-selected public figures) brought together politicians, economists, and cultural figures to address pressing societal issues in Kazakhstan. Among other issues some participants advocated for the introduction of a legislative ban on LGBTI representation.

In June, a petition to ban all forms of LGBTI ‘propaganda’ gathered enough signatures to be officially reviewed, as reported by El.kz and confirmed by the press service of the Ministry of Culture and Information of Kazakhstan. In July, the working group reviewing the petition held its second meeting with representatives from the government. In response to an official media inquiry from The Village Kazakhstan, the Ministry of Culture and Information of Kazakhstan defended the petition. The Ministry notably argued that the petition does not infringe upon human rights or advocate for discrimination and instead solely aims to limit children’s and adolescents’ exposure to information promoting “non-traditional family values.” Reports have surfaced that the petition’s success was orchestrated by coercive tactics among employees of public institutions. A schoolteacher and a nurse revealed receiving directives to sign the petition via group chats affiliated with the ruling political party. In August, a public discussion on the petition took place at Astana’s Kazmedia Centre, with interventions by government officials like that of a Ministry of Internal Affairs representative who attributed the rising crime rates to the online dissemination of information about sexual freedom.

FAMILY

In an interview with Ulys Media, Askhat Aimagambetov, Deputy of the Majilis and Chairman of the Committee on Social and Cultural Development, shared insights on various pressing social issues in Kazakhstan. Notably, Aimagambetov cited LGBTI adoption rights as a contentious topic that he believes to be often instrumentalised to create divisions between society and the authorities.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

In early March, the Nazarbayev University announced a ban on its yearly Women’s Day march. The decision followed an unofficial warning from the mayor’s office, which argued that such rallies promote non-traditional values like LGBTI rights, and potentially disrupt public order. Officials cited “threats to public safety” as one of the reasons for these refusals, approving instead another government-affiliated rally. Among various proposals, this rally also called for a ban on “feminist and LGBTI propaganda” and emphasised the need to protect traditional family values.

In October, Bagila Baltabayeva, the author of a petition against “LGBT propaganda” in Kazakhstan, attempted to disrupt the “Lesbian Kurultai” event in Almaty, organised by the Feminita movement. Law enforcement took both Feminita, as well as Baltabayeva and her associates, to the police station for questioning. Feminita leaders filed a statement accusing the disruptors of petty hooliganism, clarifying that the event was legally conducted and that they had not violated any laws.

In April, members of Parliament proposed a provision to officially

classify “LGBT propaganda” as a legitimate reason for banning peaceful assemblies if such gatherings were deemed to promote it. This proposal was later withdrawn, and no draft law has been submitted to introduce such an amendment.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

In October, the feminist initiative Feminita organised a conference in Almaty. On the opening day, the booked venues were reportedly denied the bookings, allegedly due to a blacklist targeting Feminita. The group accused the Almaty Akimat (city administration) of pressuring businesses to cancel the event. Despite these challenges, the organisers managed to secure an alternative location. However, shortly after the event commenced, the power was cut off.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In April, a proposal aiming to prohibit media outlets from covering what is termed as “propaganda of non-traditional sexual orientation” was added to the parliamentary discussions on a law concerning mass media. The proposed amendment was unexpectedly removed from the draft law, without any clarification on the status of the amendment, leaving its future uncertain.

In April, Parliament deputies – Yedil Zhanbyrshin and Samat Musabaev, both from the Amanat party, proposed to include “LGBTI propaganda” as a punishable crime within Article 174 of the Criminal Code on the “Incitement of social, national, tribal, racial, class or religious discord” with penalties of imprisonment of up to seven years.

In June, Vitaly Shevchenko, a graphic designer from Ekibastuz, reported that two plainclothes police officers visited his home following his Facebook posts opposing a petition against “LGBTI propaganda.” The police officers issued a warning about his posts, urging him to be cautious to avoid “inciting discord” and warned him that his posts could lead to legal consequences. Shevchenko had previously appealed to the Minister of Culture and Information, arguing that the petition could incite discrimination and breach human rights norms, continuing to voice his concerns on his social media platforms.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In July, the UN Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, and the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education urged the Kazakh

government to reject the petition requesting legislation capable of banning both visible and covert LGBTI “propaganda.” In a common statement, they argued that such legislation would breach Kazakhstan’s Administrative Procedural Code and international human rights obligations.

In April, during the 15th Annual Human Rights Dialogue between the EU and Kazakhstan, the EU addressed the treatment of LGBTI persons.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

The media agency Mediazona reported that trans individuals in Kazakhstan still face significant obstacles in aligning their legal documents with their gender identity. The report indicated that such delays derive from outdated legal and medical practices like mandatory psychiatric evaluations, government approvals, and mandatory sex reassignment surgery.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL LIFE

In April, various LGBTI initiatives, including the Education Community, LBkeshter and Amirovki, ran a crowdfunding campaign to support victims of April floodings in Kazakhstan to improve intersectional collaboration and positive coverage of LGBTI community.

PUBLIC OPINION

In February, members of the Zheltoksan 86 movement organised a protest in Almaty against LGBTI rights, calling on Kazakhstan to enact legislation banning LGBTI activities and to prevent upcoming LGBTI demonstrations.

In July, travel blogger and trans activist Devin Halbal visited Almaty and held a fan meeting, which drew a large crowd. Despite the support from many fans, the visit sparked controversy online.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

In February, Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev enacted amendments to the country’s children’s rights legislation. These amendments aimed at barring LGBTI people from adopting or mentoring children and setting up specific psychological tests to assess the sexual orientation of potential mentors and adoptive parents.

In April, journalist Botagoz Omarova reported a series of police raids targeting LGBTI parties in Astana. Omarova detailed that during one weekend, around 70 individuals were detained at a police station, where they were reportedly coerced into providing statements. According to documentation reports, two raids in

Astana’s gay nightclub and a private LGBTI party in April resulted in the detention of approximately 300 people overall. Law enforcement officers forced the detainees to disclose sensitive personal information, including their sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI), under duress. During the raids, police also forced HIV tests in non-confidential settings, and coerced individuals to sign statements about their SOGI with no definite explanation about the data’s use. Despite fears of further persecution, 33 detainees from the Astana raids sought legal support, leading to an unprecedented collective appeal by 27 of them to challenge the police’s actions and a progressive ruling by the local prosecutor’s office in July.

In June, in a closed LGBTI chat on Telegram, an activist shared a video of themselves holding a Pride flag in one of the courtyards of Astana’s residential complexes. A day later, police officers visited the activist’s mother and asked her to contact them for an interrogation about the alleged theft of a bicycle in the courtyard. After continued disturbances, the activist met with the police, where they were interrogated by an unknown local akimat (mayor’s office) employee, shown the video, and warned of harsher punishment if their actions ever repeated.

In July 2024, a pre-trial investigation was launched by the Karasai District Police Department in response to a video featuring choreographer Alisher Sultanbekuly dancing in high heels inside a yurt. The video, which sparked significant outrage online, led to the investigation for incitement of social, national, or religious hatred, carrying a penalty of up to seven years in prison. Minister of Culture and Information Aida Balayeva warned that such content could divide society and threaten Kazakhstan’s cultural norms. Sultanbekuly’s video was widely discussed, particularly regarding the tension between freedom of expression and maintaining cultural traditions.

A similar case was recorded in August, when Aman Aubakirov – a high-heels dancer – was fined by police for hooliganism after performing a high-heels dance in an advertisement video. He was asked intrusive questions regarding his relationship status, sexual orientation, and police required him to write an explanatory note that the advertisement video was not created with the intention of “spreading LGBT propaganda”.



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