



# Belarus

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

On 16 January 2025, Archpriest Andrey Lemeshonok of the St. Elisabeth Convent stated on the state television channel ONT that Western countries promote "an ideology of destroying personality and family," that children are "corrupted" in schools, that "Europe and America have rejected God," and described LGBTIQ+ people as "sick people."

In October 2025, Olga Shpilevskaya, head of the pro-government Belarusian Women's Union and director of the Belarus office of the interstate TV and radio company Mir, stated on the program "Editors' Club" that Belarusian children should use "traditional toys" from a state-linked manufacturer and claimed that Western toys promote "transgender dolls" and foreign ideology among children, describing this as harmful influence.

In July 2025, Oleg Gaidukevich, chairman of the pro-government Liberal Democratic Party of Belarus, commenting on legislative amendments related to restrictions on so-called "propaganda" of gender reassignment, stated that in Belarus one could speak about gender transition "only at a garbage dump," and that such a person would be detained afterward.

In 2025, the state-affiliated regional outlet "Grodzenskaya Pravda" published an article titled "Alien values, or how the Schneider family fled from the praised Western tolerance to Belarus," which portrayed "Western tolerance" as a threat to family and children and contrasted it with Belarusian "traditional values." The same article was republished on the websites of state institutions and enterprises, including the Leninsky District Administration of Grodno and the state enterprise Grodnovodokanal.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In 2025, civil society reported that the Belarusian state continued to use the register of "extremist materials" to ban books, magazines, and online media platforms, including those operating in Europe but produce information in Russian or Belarusian that deal with topics of sexuality, sexual and reproductive rights. Following court decisions of Russia, the Belarusian state banned fiction and non-fiction books, such as "Call me by your name" by Andre Aciman, "Middlesex" by Jeffrey Eugenides, and others.

In July, Belarus adopted Law No. 86-Z amending the Law "On the Rights of the Child." The amendments classify "propaganda of homosexual relations, gender reassignment, pedophilia, and childlessness" as harmful to children's psychological health. The revised wording of Article 37 includes "discrediting the institution of the family and marital and family relations aimed at the propaganda of homosexual relations, gender reassignment, pedophilia, and childlessness." The amendments entered into force in January 2026. In July, a similar draft law was submitted by the Prosecutor General against "propaganda of homosexual relations, sex change, childlessness, and paedophilia." The proposed article criminalises the "dissemination in any form of information aimed at shaping citizens' perceptions of the attractiveness" of LGBTI identities or child-free living, while equating them with pedophilia. According to the draft, any product with a mention of LGBTI themes should contain an age label of 18+, with the provision applying to books, movies, and the media at large. Penalties under the draft include fines of up to €220 for individuals, up to €1,110 for entrepreneurs, and up to €1,650 for legal entities. If the alleged information is accessible to minors, sanctions increase to short-term detention for citizens and fines up to €2,200 for companies.

In October, the lower house of the Belarusian parliament adopted, at first reading, the draft law. The bill must still pass a second reading, be reviewed by the Council of the Republic, and be signed by President Alexander Lukashenko.

Civil society groups expressed concerns on the draft law, condemning it as "an open attack on human rights and personal freedoms, including freedom of expression, the right to non-discrimination, and the right to privacy."

## FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

In August, Belarusian authorities designated the Belarusian Association of Human Rights Lawyers (BAHRL) as an "extremist formation." In September, the LGBTI media outlet DazHip was designated as extremist by a decision of the Pukhovichy District Court of the Minsk Region. Following the designation, the Ministry of Internal Affairs added BAHRL and six

lawyers allegedly associated with the organisation to the national list of individuals and entities involved in "extremist activities." Under Belarusian law, being named as part of an "extremist formation" exposes individuals to potential criminal prosecution, with penalties of up to 10 years in prison.

## FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN, OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

In February, the Group of Independent Experts on the Human Rights Situation in Belarus presented its latest [findings](#) documenting abuses committed by Belarusian authorities since the 2020 elections. The report detailed a broad campaign of repression, including arbitrary arrests, torture, sexual violence, and the persecution of political opponents, journalists, and LGBTI people. The experts found that arrests are frequently politically motivated and carried out with excessive force, intimidation, and threats. Detainees reported beatings, electric shocks, sexual threats, and the coercion of family members. The report highlighted the particularly brutal treatment of LGBTI people, who face slurs, sexual humiliation, and targeted violence in detention. One case described a trans woman being severely beaten, threatened with rape, and forced into a false confession.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

In December, Belarus [released](#) 123 political prisoners, including Nobel Peace Prize laureate Ales Bialiatski and prominent opposition leader Maria Kolesnikova, following two days of talks with the United States aimed at improving bilateral relations. The releases were part of a broader agreement in which the United States announced the lifting of sanctions on Belarus.

However, state-led repressions on human rights defenders and civil activists continued. As of December, [1,145](#) people were held in detention as political prisoners according to the Belarusian Human Rights Centre Viasna. During 2025, at least [1,254 people](#) were persecuted on political grounds, including LGBTI community members.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

In June, a ['Gender Transition Commission'](#) examined

the applications of 30 trans people seeking trans-specific healthcare and/or legal gender recognition, leading to only eight approvals. The date of the meeting was announced only a few days in advance, making preparation difficult and adding psychological strain.

Further, participants reported that the methods remained outdated and discriminatory, with members asking inappropriate and humiliating questions about intimate life, everyday habits, alcohol preferences, and even physiological details. Applicants were also unexpectedly required to retake psychological tests that are typically conducted during initial registration. Explanations given for refusals were vague and subjective, often resting on arbitrary judgments about "inappropriate" personal qualities rather than objective standards.

In September, the Ministry of Health of Belarus [amended](#) the rules governing legal gender recognition procedures and changed the composition of the Gender Transition Commission, removing a sexologist and replacing this role with a psychiatrist-narcologist.

In December, a [Gender Transition Commission](#) meeting in Minsk examined applications of approximately 36 trans applicants seeking trans-specific healthcare and/or legal gender recognition, resulting in 16 approvals. The meeting date was announced one week in advance, and at least two applicants were unable to attend due to the short notice.

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

In April, LGBTI psychologist and activist Marina A. was [detained](#) in Minsk by officers of the State Security Committee (KGB). She was not informed of the grounds for detention and was interrogated. Officers threatened to initiate criminal proceedings for alleged participation in an extremist formation if she refused to cooperate and provide information about LGBTI activists and organisations. Following pressure from law enforcement, she reduced her professional activities and later left Belarus due to fear of further persecution.

In July, a closed drag event in Minsk was exposed by pro-government Telegram channels through photos and videos. According to TG House, police detained at least two participants, confiscated phones, questioned them about event attendees and organisers, and released them without formal detention records. Both detainees reported that law enforcement asked personal questions about sexual orientation and involvement in other events.

Between August and October, Belarusian police officers exerted pressure on the parents of a trans man who had relocated to France after fleeing repression. Police made at least two phone calls to his parents demanding his contact details and social media accounts and visited his former place of residence, where they questioned neighbors about his whereabouts. Officers warned the parents that they could be summoned for questioning if they refused to provide information.

Between August and November, Belarusian law enforcement officers repeatedly visited the parents of a transmasculine non-binary person residing in Poland as an asylum seeker. Officers questioned the parents about his location, address, and activities, and demanded that he return to Belarus to cancel his residence registration. In October, he was reported to have been placed on a wanted list in the Russian Federation.

In August, in a city in the Vitebsk region, police officers detained a gay man without publicly stated grounds, examined the contents of his phone, including contacts and correspondence, and subsequently summoned and questioned other men whose details were found on the device. Some of those contacted reported threats of liability related to alleged sharing of intimate materials.

In September, OMON riot police raided a queer-friendly party in a Minsk club. According to TG House, officers stopped the event, forced visitors to lie on the floor or stand facing the wall, conducted searches, and detained approximately 10–15 people. Detainees reported humiliating and homophobic remarks; at least four people were charged with minor administrative offences.

In November, a queer woman was subjected to doxing through pro-government resources linked to security structures. After publication of her personal data, police officers contacted her and applied pressure aimed at coercing cooperation; she subsequently left Belarus.